

Remembering

Empowering

TEACHERS



Remem
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TEACH

**100 stories from
dedicated teachers and
grateful students**



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



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**UNESCO Islamabad
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Remembering Empowering Teachers

100 stories from dedicated teachers and grateful students

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PREFACE

Teachers are seen as the primary catalyst for delivering quality education. They comprise the largest workforce in Pakistan, estimated at 1.5 million. Teachers are a crucial element in the achievement of the international education goals of Education for All (EFA) and of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The growing shortage of qualified teachers is the main challenge to the realization of these goals. Dissatisfaction with loss in status, low salaries, poor teaching and learning conditions, and lack of career progression or adequate professional training have driven large numbers of teachers out of the profession, sometimes after only a few years of service.

However, despite the fact mentioned above there are a number of teachers in Pakistan who encourage students to learn and help them grow mentally and intellectually with strong commitments. For those teachers, teaching itself rewards them and they keep improving their pedagogies. This book is a collection of narratives of those teachers in the country.

The narratives collected from students and teachers range from primary to tertiary levels, from young and old professionals and entail capturing texts and memories of teachers and students who triggered positive change and power for the student and the teacher. The texts are original narratives of firsthand experience, simply and elegantly portrayed.

We would like to acknowledge and thank ITA for resource support. This initiative has been possible by the hard effort and dedication of ITA's team.

We would also like to thank all the contributors of narratives for their valuable contribution. This book is a way of saying we appreciate their sacrifices, acknowledge their challenges and appreciate their contribution towards social and economic change and development of Pakistan.

UNESCO Islamabad

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Commitment to Profession

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Memories from the Classroom

By Anwar Masood

I will share with you some reflections, some memories from my days as a student and my experiences as a teacher. Beneath these brief anecdotes are layers of meaning that I leave you to unravel.

Syed Wazir-ul-Hassan Abidi was my teacher at the Punjab University when I was doing my Masters in Persian. He would not allow any student to enter the class unless the student had a question, because, he would say, knowledge starts with a question. If you collect the answers to your questions about a plant, for example, you get the science of Botany.

Chaudhry Fazal Hussain was my teacher at Gujrat Zamindar College. This was how he described a good teacher: A good teacher is one whose new batch of students is the new edition of his book of research, meaning thereby that a teacher is constantly renewing his/her knowledge. It was Chaudhry Fazal Hussain who encouraged me to 'step out of the quagmire of science' and to take up humanities, as I was then enrolled in the FSc. Pre-Medical programme. I had written a couple of poems then. One was on childhood as I used to moan the loss of my childhood, standing on the threshold of adolescence.

Conciseness is also an important quality for a teacher to have. I went to Iran with a group of 40 other teachers. There I met a teacher who, when he spoke, seemed to enfold 5 or 6 books within the capsule of one sentence. For example about Allama Iqbal he said, 'He came too early.' What he meant to say was that the entire future will be his.

I have felt the greatest joy when I was a teacher in a classroom. A teacher, as I see it, should give his students the permission to question and secondly he should have a strong command over his subject. In class 8th as I was teaching the three states of matter, a student said, "Give us an example of all three states co-existing." I gave him the example of a hukkah. It is made of solid wood, it emits smoke and it contains water! That's all your three states, solid, liquid and gas.

I was once a teacher at a school in Kunjah, near Gujrat. My poem 'Ambri' is based on an experience I had while teaching there. It is about a student Bashir who comes late to class because he was stalled by his class-fellow Akram's mother. She made a special lunch for Akram and sent it with Bashir. And why did Akram not take his lunch with him? Why did he leave home in a rush without eating anything? Akram quarreled with his mother and left home angry that morning; he struck her, his own mother, with a rolling-pin that broke from the force of the violent blow. Still the mother, bruised and hurt by her own son, is anxious to send the choicest of food for her errant son.

It took me 10 years to write this poem. Such is the rich nature of human experience and the imperfection of the eye that sees it, that you can never quite encompass the true essence of an event through words. A teacher's experience in the classroom is no less complex than any other, as each child brings his own universe to class; it is then up to the teacher to make sense out of it, to respond to it and to some extent, reshape it.

The author is a celebrated intellectual and a popular poet. His poems in Urdu and Punjabi are widely read.

My Soldiers of Education

Mrs Farah Ali Butt

I used to teach at a school in Muzaffarabad before the earthquake struck in 2005. I had two students, brothers, aged seven and eight, who used to come every day from Langar Pura to attend school. Everyday Hassan and Masood would make the forty five minute journey, partially by bus, partially on foot, to attend school. Their feet would be red from the cold by the time they made it to school. They were a little behind the other children in math but I was making the concepts clear to them using real life examples. They were making quick progress.

On 8th October, 2005, the day of that fatal earthquake, I had taken a day off from school. Everything changed after that day. The roof of our school collapsed. It fell on Hassan and Masood. My two soldiers of education died in action.

My husband got a spinal injury too and we moved him to a hospital in Islamabad. As I nursed my husband back to health, I also tutored other patients who were there at the hospital. There was four year old Anoosha and Sehrish who was in FA, Safiya who was in BA. I gave them English language classes and gave them notes for political science etc. This was usually from 7pm 10pm.

Recognizing that this was my calling in life, I later set up an NGO for the education of special children, with the support of the Ministry of Welfare and Special Education. The organization provides support through awareness raising for example creating awareness about the effects of cousin marriages on

future generations. We also provide leg-braces for children who need them.

Have you ever heard of the wounded healer? It is said that the best healer is one who has himself experienced the illness. I too am such a wounded healer.

The author is a teacher at the Idara Taleem-o-Aagahi Drop-in center for children working as domestic labor. She is also running her own NGO by the name of Disabled People Development Organization, in Islamabad.

Never Say Quit...

By Sijal Tauseef Khan

It was the first day of my first job as a teacher in a private school in Lahore. I was extremely tired. I thought I would not be able to continue. 'Just go through the day somehow and say goodbye to the job tomorrow', I said to myself.

As a new teacher I was being sent to different classes to substitute for absent teachers. "Just keep the kids in the class till the next period" was the advice I got from the teacher who handed me my day's schedule.

The first class was enough to throw me off balance. It was a Grade-6 class with very active boys and a few girls who were being given a language lesson on a computer. The young instructor was helpless in the face of their shouting, fighting and throwing chairs. I sat there as a helpless spectator, stunned by the students' attitude and unable to bring any order in the class.

I moved on to the next class after this, hoping for calmer students. This was Grade-4 with students who very gladly misguided me, telling me that their teacher had left no plan for a substitute teacher. I spent all the time handing out extra stationery to half the class and generally just settling their disputes. I thanked God when the bell rang.

The next class was no better. And the next. I was starting to think that teaching was not my cup of tea. Things were very different now from when I used to be in school. Children were very bold now. They were not to be taught by a novice teacher who was unsure of how to handle them.

By the time I was sent to Grade-1, I was so tired I could not think straight. I had resolved to quit. I entered the class. I just sat down, and looked at the 15 or so children, wondering what trick they had up their sleeve.

Surprisingly, this was a much calmer class. It was their arts period. They had their sketch books out and were working on an assignment given by their regular teacher. This was a group with younger and sweeter kids. I gratefully sat quietly in my chair, thinking what an eventful day it had been and how I will not have to go through the same tomorrow as I had decided to quit.

Just then two little girls came up to me, 'Miss', one of them said, 'What is your name?' 'Sijal', I told her.

'Can you write it down for me?' she asked.

'Sure', I said and wrote down my name for her.

She went back to her desk and started drawing. The class was miraculously over without any major disaster. It had in fact been quite useful as the students had made some drawings. 'Miss', the same girl came up to me 'I made this for you'. I took the paper from her, intrigued

It had a flower in the centre, a butterfly, the sun, trees, birds and something scrawled in the corner. I tried hard to read it. It said "I love Miss Sijal". Just looking at the drawing I felt so happy. I forgot my frustration and my desire to quit. "Will you come tomorrow?" The girl asked me "of course", I smiled.

Teaching is not all that bad. I thought to myself...

And I am not going to give up that easily!

Sijal continued to teach in that school for two years. Currently she is the Additional Director (Training & Coordination) at the National School of Public Policy, Lahore.

Once a Teacher Always a Teacher

By Nabil Asghar

I became a teacher right after passing my matriculation examination, from Central High School Quetta. I had to earn and save to pay for my further education. From that moment on till now, I have been a teacher, at one level or another. I taught at a primary school for some months and then joined an English Language Institute as an English instructor. This was in the year 2000, when the trend of English language centers was at its peak. People of all ages, professions and educational backgrounds were my students in this class. I also had Afghan refugees in my class, who only had basic literacy. At the end of one year they were able to communicate quite effectively.

There were many female students in my class. I found that if taught separately from men, these women were communicative and absorbed new knowledge easily. They also scored well at the end of a course. The same women, however, did not perform as well if they were in a co-education classroom. Thus the English language faculty decided as a team to hold separate classes for women. We set aside a time for socializing and for confidence building when the male and female students would interact. We saw that this plan had a positive impact on our students' language acquisition and personality formation.

I was fortunate to be a part of a teaching team that was dynamic and cohesive. I remember that I once talked to my colleagues about how there was a need to enhance English language skills among school teachers, specially public sector

teachers. My colleagues took up the idea. Together we prepared a proposal for English classes for primary and secondary teachers and presented it to the Education Secretary. We put in some effort to follow up on our proposal, and sure enough, we got the approval.

We were able to teach seventy school teachers at our institute, free of cost. We set time aside for newspaper reading practice and for having conversations. This was an add-on of minutes to the sixty minute class. At the end of the course, the Ministry of Education awarded an appreciation certificate to our institution.

I left the Institute to finish my own education and then started to teach O' Level and A' Level students. The difference in their level of understanding and that of students from the public sector is alarming. These students had exposure to the language, their families facilitated their studies and they had been given the space to question and to express their own opinions.

I have taught children, adolescents and adults over the course of my career. I have taught people from all kinds of backgrounds. Whichever level I taught, I knew I was doing something important, teaching people to communicate.

The author is currently a lecturer at Iqra University, Quetta

Truth can be Stranger than Fiction

By Haroona Jatoi

Miss Nasreen taught me science from class sixth to class tenth. She was immaculate in her attire, a perfectionist in her work and generally accessible to all of us at the Government Muslim School for Girls, Faisalabad. She would play badminton with us, help us with our Math assignments for hours even though she wasn't even our Math teacher. She was happy to stay back after school and help us with chemistry experiments. She didn't care how long it took. She wanted us to get it right. Unlike other teachers' sprawling tick marks across our note-books, Ms. Nasreen's corrections would be done in the neatest way possible. The result: we all did tidier work for Ms. Nasreen than we did for any other teacher. It was only natural that we did so.

Her mentor was her older brother who was visually impaired. After the death of her parents he was the head of the family despite his handicap.

Life went on and I joined the Punjab University for my Masters in Administrative Sciences. There I met Professor Muneer Ahmed, upright, straightforward and unbending in the face of political pressures. He was neither impressed nor intimidated by wealth and status. Needless to say, he was very popular among students.

Sir Muneer too was a role model for me for his dignified conduct and his high standards of integrity. My Masters programme at the Punjab University had come to an end. I had now been working as a Research Associate for a year at the same university when we had our slightly delayed Farewell Party. Sir Muneer was there too. Students clustered around him. They were asking him why he hadn't

married. He said something about a blind brother for whom he felt responsible and so had decided against marriage. As I heard this I thought about Ms. Nasreen and her blind brother! I mentioned Ms. Nasreen, and sure enough, she turned out to be Sir Muneer's sister! I was more than surprised! I had been nurtured by two individuals in different cities and at different points of my life, and they both turned out to be branches of the same tree! I marveled at the parents who must have raised this golden crop.

These two teachers, one in Lahore and one in Faisalabad, impacted me at different stages of my life. To this day when I hold my head high and walk I am reminded of how Ms. Nasreen would tell me to be proud of myself and walk straight and tall when she saw me hunch my shoulders because I was one of the taller girls in my class. Ms. Nasreen cared enough to notice everything. She cared enough to do something about the things she noticed. When I see shortcomings in any thing, I am not happy. I know that Ms. Nasreen the perfectionist and Muneer Ahmed the unbending idealist still guide my words and deeds. My only regret is that I have not maintained any contact with them.

Dr. Haroona Jatoi is currently serving as Director General, Academy of Education Planning, Ministry of Education. She is an alumna of the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

What Goes Around comes Around

By **Mohammad Hassan Domki**

How did I become a teacher? How did God's Will lead me to this path?

I did my B.Sc in 1999 and was eager to continue my studies to do my Masters in science. However fate had other plans for me. My family was hit by sudden and unforeseen financial problems. I was thus forced to take up a job at WAPDA. I still harboured other plans in my mind: studying and teaching. I continued with my job for some time. Then the desire to work as a teacher compelled me to leave my job at WAPDA. I moved to Elementary College Mustug for P.T.C-a professional course for the Junior Vernacular Teachers (J.V.T)

After the completion of my P.T.C, I waited anxiously for vacancy announcements in my town Sibi. I had already sent an application to the E.D.O to teach at High School Ghareeab Abad Sibi as a volunteer. My application was accepted. The E.D.O sent me to Headmaster Imam Bukish (Late). He appointed me to teach ninth and tenth classes. Teaching such senior classes polished and enhanced my skills. I also taught Physics, Chemistry and English to seventh and eighth classes.

After a while people started to approach me to tutor their children. Even though I was working as a volunteer at the school, the tuitions proved to be a good source of income for me. These tuitions eased my financial burdens to some extent.

During that time, teaching Mathematics to a poverty-stricken student of sixth class proved a catalyst for me. Uzair was from a very poor family. He had almost bid farewell to his education.

One day he came to me to inform me of all these bitter realities. I offered him

solace and persuaded him to continue with his studies. I promised to bear all the expenses of his studies. Now with my earnings from tuitions, I was able to make such an offer. Today Uzair is doing his M.Sc. in Chemistry at the University of Balochistan, Quetta.

Within a brief period of 3 years, I had learned and taught Mathematics up to the Matric level. That had been made possible only with Divine Help, with the sheer blessing of ALLAH.

I truly believe that it was this good deed that moved the cosmos to open doors for me. My small act of kindness earned me the love of God.

Soon after this I came across an advertisement of vacancies of Junior Vernacular Teachers (JVTs). Without wasting a single moment I applied for the post. I was chosen by the selection committee. I was posted at Government Boys High School Ghareeab Abad Sibi with full pay and allowances. I had faith in God and in my abilities; and God had carried me swiftly to a content life.

In 2006, I was appointed Senior Subject Teacher (SST), Science. This was an honour for me. I have now been working as an SST for three years. Recently I was declared the Best Teacher.

Reaching this far had not seemed possible on the day when I took up a job in WAPDA seven years ago.

As I belong to a very poor family I am fully aware of how financial concerns may disrupt a child's academic career. I am determined to help students who need financial support. It is only with God's support that I can achieve even an iota of my goals in life.

The author is a Senior Subject Teacher of Science at Government Middle School, Dephal Bostan, Sibi, Balochistan.

Who Wants to be a Teacher?

By Farid A. Khwaja

I have often heard it said that a good teacher is a rare find. My experience has been completely different. In my entire academic career there have been very few teachers whom I did not like. Apart from these, all my teachers were inspiring and effective. This must be the reason why I chose to be a teacher and taught for almost 25 years in an age when teachers were the lowest paid professionals.

I remember when I made this decision friends and relatives would find it very amusing. “You want to become a teacher? But you have a strong academic background; you can become anything you want!” I found it hard to explain to them that this was exactly what I wanted to do! So what if the best students were opting to become doctors and lawyers, teaching was what I wanted to do.

I loved my teachers so much because they loved me. At the time when I was studying, taking tuitions was not so rampant as it is nowadays. Students who absolutely needed to take tuitions would do so and that too secretly. Nor would their tutors openly announce that they were taking tuitions. It was just not considered to be a proper thing to do.

If I needed help in understanding any concept my teachers would tell me to visit them and give me help for any length of time. They would give up their time of rest in order to be of use to me. My teacher Sir Khwaja Muhammad Nawaz helped me go over the entire F.Sc course in mathematics before I had even entered college.

My teachers did all this for no payment, at least not for any cash payment: I did pay my dues in the currency of respect and by trying to emulate them when I myself became a teacher.

As a teacher I felt eye contact was very important; I would look at my students' faces for signs of understanding. Looking at their expressions told me when to ask a question, when to invite discussion.

My first teaching assignment was at Punjab University, Physics Department. Some of my students had been my class-fellows in the past, too. I was a very young lecturer and people would often ask me if the students took advantage of that. My answer always used to be, 'If they did, it was an advantage I wanted them to take, so my classroom would be abuzz with interaction and discussion.'

During years and years of teaching, I realized that my university students had significant gaps in their learning, that something was amiss somewhere. That was when I decided in 1996 to work for the Ministry of Education to bring systemic change in science and technical education.

Improving curriculum and infrastructure is important but it is the teacher who is the lynch pin; it is the teacher who makes all the difference. That is why I wanted to work to improve teacher quality. A teacher has to have a balance, a mix of some key elements.

I think of the balance in my own teachers; they were strict disciplinarians but they did handle us with kid gloves sometimes. This reminds me of an incident.

When we were in grade seven, we were more than a little noisy one day and got a good scolding from Sir Nasim Arshad. A group of us were hurt and angry at being yelled at by our teacher. Our entire group stopped talking to the teacher or participating in class. Two three days passed and we continued to sulk.

Things normalized only after our teacher asked us one day why we weren't talking; although our teachers were extremely strict by today's standards, yet our teacher did not consider it beneath his dignity to ask us why we were angry.

A lot of times teachers are strict with students for the sake of their own ego, but not our Sir Nasim Arshad. It was never about him, it was about us, his students. And this is the biggest truth for an educator: That it is all about the student.

The author is the Chairperson of the National Institute of Science and Technology Education, Islamabad.

Tales of Inspiration

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A Clear Conscience

By A Teacher

Teaching is an arduous task indeed, especially teaching those students who are pushed to the tertiary level of education without ever learning to know elementary things about their subjects of study. The responsibility of managing a degree college in a rugged region of the country, somehow fell on my shoulders.

I had previously had the experience of running a Boys Intermediate College but in a different cultural backdrop. The degree college the responsibility of which was assigned to me now had a long history of rowdy student behavior and insolent groupings.

Right from the day of taking over the charge of office, I set myself the task of ensuring that regular classes were held by the teaching staff; but the response was frustrating. It appeared that nobody was ready to accept what to me was rational advice. The first two or three months were so nerve-wrecking that I started thinking of quitting the job altogether.

Then I decided to change my strategy. Being a teacher of English, I arranged for engaging classes in the zero periods for those who wanted to have a grasp on English language skills. There were about 25 students present on the first day. On the second, their number doubled and by the third day, so many students were eagerly waiting that I had to engage the class in the main hall. The only key to success was that I brought my teaching to their level. Once I made the teaching relevant to them I managed to elicit responses from them.

From that day, the tension between the college administration and the students melted. The morning class had created a relationship of trust between us.

What did I actually do in the English class? I encouraged them to think and write very short pieces related to their own environment both at the college and at home. I asked them to use words from their own language whenever they failed to find a proper word in English and, later, gave them the needed vocabulary in English.

The students started communicating without feeling inhibited and without any sense of inadequacy in the language. I ignored their mistakes and always rewarded them with words of praise and encouragement for their responses. I had to help them a lot in framing their responses and warmly applauded when they finally managed to produce the correct sentences. It needed lots of patience and perseverance.

As the college was to be closed for vacations, I prepared to go for my hometown, leaving behind a junior colleague as officiating principal. The cashier of the college handed over an amount which was to be paid to a bookseller in my home town for library books that we had purchased. Another amount was also entrusted to me for payment to the furniture supplier. All this added up to eighty thousand. In the eighties, a sum of eighty thousand rupees was really a very huge amount. I boarded a coaster bus around midnight.

At about 2am, as the bus was passing through a narrow valley, there was a highway hold-up. About half a dozen masked gunmen forced the driver to stop and asked all the passengers to get down one by one holding their bags in hand. I was panic-stricken because I was carrying government money with me and would surely be expected to make good the loss.

The passengers started disembarking. A person standing outside near the exit frisked them hurriedly and then directed them to his companions who searched them thoroughly and deprived them of their watches, cash and other valuables. The victims were then directed to stand in another group which was guarded by two other armed men. As I stepped down the coaster, the masked man said, "Sir, you go to that group."

directing me to the people who had been thoroughly searched and fleeced of cash and other belongings. I was stunned to hear those words but quietly followed his command and joined the group of cleansed passengers. After about an hour, the armed men threatened the passengers of dire consequences if they raised an alarm, and disappeared in the darkness.

From the way the gunman addressed me I understood that he must have been a student of mine. It was not something to be proud of, yet I had taken one step to reform the students of the college and clearly a lot remained to be done.

We again boarded the coaster, reached the nearest police station and lodged a report of robbery. Obviously I was not amongst the complainants as I had been spared out of respect for a teacher. I had been so shaken by the prospect of the impending loss that I had not cared to remember the sound of voice or physical features of the highway men standing at the door of the coaster. But I was very sure that I had been spared the agony of losing Rs 80,000 because I had been a sincere teacher.

The author is a Professor at a University in Balochistan.

Education with Sophistication

By Aijaz Khan

It was our first day after being admitted to the PCC college. I enjoyed all subjects other than English and Mathematics. I had a huge problem in English which was why I usually didn't like the English teacher much.

As it was our first day, all our teachers came and introduced themselves and asked us to tell about ourselves. All our teachers were nice but the one who impressed me the most was our English teacher. As he entered class his personality was such that one couldn't help but be drawn to him. Dressed in a three-piece-suit with a light pink tie, big beautiful eyes. From the roots of his hair to the toes, he was different from all the others, the way he spoke and the way he walked. His name was Dilawar Farhan. He was the Vice Principal and our English teacher.

I had little interest in English as a subject, but the way he taught it was something else. He would create such an atmosphere in class that we would be transposed to a different era and feel at one with the characters we were reading about. He would forbid us to open our books. He would tell us in simple words what the lesson was all about, why we were studying it and what lessons there were in it for us. Then he would go over a paragraph or two from the book and explain it in great detail, so that it was deeply embedded in our minds.

Because I wasn't that good at English, I told him once when there was no one else around, that I didn't like the subject and that I couldn't speak any English. He

comforted me, saying this was not such a big problem and that I would soon learn it. He said it is important to have mastery over one's mother tongue; we only learn English to understand and to be understood by people who do not know our language. I really liked his logic.

Sir Dilawar Farhan taught me a lot as far as English was concerned. He would often ask me questions in class. He would ask me to utter whatever came to your mind, whether it is right or wrong, he would say, just say it. This way he gradually gave me courage and today I am able to both speak and understand the English language. Even today I imitate his teaching style and the way he spoke. I often dress like him.

But I can still not be like him, because a teacher is a teacher and a student is, well, a student.

The author is currently a student of BEd at the Federal College of Education, Islamabad.

More than Just a Tutor

By Akhtar Mirza

When I look back to 1976, 33 years ago, I was in seventh grade. I belonged to a lower middle class illiterate family. The locality I was living in was like a slum then. Things have changed there now. No one was there then to coach me or to follow up after school time. Going for tuition or hiring a tutor was considered a sign of the student's weakness and sluggishness. In my case, our financial conditions also did not allow me to afford a tutor anyway.

Sir Muhammad Aslam came to my school Municipal Corporation Elementary School Block No.6, Khanpur District Rahimyarkhan, as a young teacher. He had a charming personality. He was just out of university and was employed as an untrained teacher. He was enthusiastic and very caring towards all of us.

A group of my class fellows decided one day to meet him in the office after class. We very humbly requested him if he could guide us in our studies. "Sir, can you please teach us as we face great difficulty in understanding English." He smiled and said, "I don't give tuitions. I have no problem if you come to my home but I will not receive any fee." All the class-mates were delighted as his method of teaching was very effective and we enjoyed his class.

We started to go to Sir Aslam's home and our character transformation started. We would offer to do all household chores that we saw him doing at his home, like sweeping the room, sprinkling of water, dusting the rooms etc. This made us feel important, and at ease, as if we were at our own home. This way we learnt to do all

domestic chores which we had never done at our own home. His family, including his parents and his sisters were very considerate so we never felt shy working there. We often used to have dinner at our teacher's home because we used to go to him at about 4:00 P.M and returned at 8:00 P.M.

In eighth grade, he taught us English Grammar and Composition in such a way that I could now write my own compositions. He often cancelled appointments with his friends while teaching in the evening.

To top it all he was a good hockey player and had been a member of the Sukkur Division Railway Hockey Team. He took us along to watch some matches. Sometimes, after completing our daily studies, we had a game of Carrom at his home, as this was another game he was good at. He was right when he said he didn't offer tuitions, Sir Aslam instead offered a complete course in academics, self-growth and character building!

Sir Aslam made me a teacher when I reached ninth grade. He asked me to teach the eighth grade students who came to him for help. This got so deeply etched in my personality that as I grew up I could not keep away from teaching for too long.

He inculcated in me a certain work ethic, a sincerity to my profession and an intellectual honesty, such that I still I can't bear the violation of rules and regulations. Once he told me, "Always try to make yourself indispensable to an organization with your hard work, sincerity and honesty so that the organization can not let go of you." I always acted upon his advice and was blessed by God Almighty.

My father was illiterate so he never went to my school to ask about my progress. It was again my great teacher who always followed on my progress when I was in the High and Higher Secondary Section.

He always stressed on the need to study further and it was his continuous guidance due to which I continued to get all my qualifications, from F.A to M.A, and M.Ed, as a private candidate and even after my marriage!

With the passage of time, I made up my mind to become a good teacher. Teaching became a passion for me.

I admit that under severe duress from some of my family members, I agreed to change my line from teaching to Banking and was nearly selected once in Habib Bank and once in House Building Finance Corporation. When I was called to receive my appointment letter, I changed my mind and decided to continue teaching. I feel that God had decided for me to continue being a teacher.

I strongly disagree with people who say that teachers don't enjoy a high status in society. In my opinion, society still respects a teacher but for that a teacher has to be a true teacher. Like Sir Muhammad Aslam.

The son of an illiterate father who would probably have dropped out after grade seventh grew up to teach a wide range of students from Primary Classes to Post Graduate Classes as an E.S.T Teacher in the Public Sector.

The boy who may have become a mere statistic of school drop-out rates, wrote a book on "Teaching of English" for B.Ed . All because of the magical touch of one teacher.

My teacher Sir Aslam is still working in the same school as Head Teacher where he was first appointed. If he hadn't held my hand at that time, I could hardly be a matriculate and would be working as a junior clerk or a daily-wage labourer, without the invaluable work ethic that I have today, and without ever having tasted the pleasure of a nurturing adult's joyful companionship, while studying, doing

household chores and playing.

Sir Aslam, I am proud to be your student.

The author is District Manager, Rahimyar Khan, Idara Taleem o Aagahi

My Vision and My Voice

By Iftikhar Arif

'Bait Baazi' or the Poetry Recitals is a popular institution in South Asia. When I was growing up my teachers would make us learn verses to recite. This gave us a sense of the rhythm and cadence of poetry. Just like that we would put together a line or two of our own original poetry. It was my teacher Syed Muhammad Ahmad who first introduced me to renowned poets such as Josh, Majaz, Makhdoom, Sahir, Sardar Jaffery.

In 1965 I left Lucknow and moved to Pakistan. I went back to India for a visit. By this time I had appeared on television and was now a celebrity.

When I reached home my mother told me that Syed Muhammad Ahmad, my teacher had been to see me and had asked to be sent for when I came. I started off for his house right away. He lived in a narrow lane in Raja Bazaar, Lucknow. As I reached the door I sounded the door latch. I saw him, a white haired man. He gave me a hug and said, 'I am proud to have had you as a student.'

He went inside and came out with a magazine in which was written, 'Iftikhar Hussain Arif, Class 7th'. It was a poem I had written that was published in the school magazine.

"There is a story behind this that I want you to know. When the magazine was edited there were lots of stories and poems. (In Lucknow everyone is a poet - men, women, illiterate people); when the teachers received the material, your poem was not really among the best. It was not

likely to be chosen for publication, but I cast my vote in favour of your poem because this was a poem that a child had himself written." And thus the poem got to be printed. It was then that I had seen my name in print for the first time. Had that poem not been published I would not have been a poet today.

Some things are taken for granted today in the middle and upper classes, but in the masses they are still were they were several decades ago, when I was a child. Timely detection of weak eyesight is one such thing. I was in class ninth then, in Government Jubilee College Lucknow. My teacher Sir Badr Uddin had written an algebra equation on the black board. He asked me a question. I stood up to answer but I couldn't see clearly what was written on the board. He was about to hit me with the rope of the punkh, the manually moved fan in class, but then he stopped. and took me outside. There was only one eye surgeon in Lucknow, and that is where he took me. To Dr. Kualapur. My teacher got me my first ever glasses. He even paid for them himself.

In the sub-continent, there is a strong tradition of a Master, a Wise Teacher, such as Buddha, Sheikh, Murshid or Guru. Had these figures not been there, there would be no one to guide us to God. Whatever I have learnt in life was from my teachers; how to walk alongside the river and how look at flowers, how to dress, how to speak softly, lower your gaze.

Dr Radha Kamal Mukherjee was the founder of philosophy, someone I greatly admired. My gait today is a replica of the way that great teacher used to walk.

If I look at the gifts of all these teachers, I can say that Sir Badr Uddin gave me vision, Sir Syed Mohammad Ahmed gave me recognition and a voice and Dr Radha Mukherjee gave me direction.

The author is a celebrated poet of Pakistan and the DG of the Pakistan Academy of Letters.

Vicariously Speaking

By *Rashida Kamil*

This poem is dedicated to Hafeez Taib, who is a respected name in Urdu ghazal and naat (verse in praise of Prophet Muhammad SAW). He served as a teacher and as the Head of the Department in the Punjabi Department, Punjab University. I was never fortunate enough to have studied under him, but I have an indirect link with him due to my dear friend Dr. Nabeela Rehman. He was a great poet of ghazal and naat, a wonderful human being and a kind teacher. May Allah rest his soul in peace.

When I heard his mention from Nabeela
 I would say to her, tell me...
 'What is your sir like?
 In which land does he reside?
 He stirs love in words...but how?
 The gates of love and beauty he
 unlocks...but how?
 Do you feel love for him? Or devotion? Or
 another emotion beyond these?'
 I keep saying to her,
 'Someday show me, too,
 That face, the sight of which
 Brings radiance to your eyes.'
 On hearing this,
 An endless silence
 Descends and rests between us
 I would again say,
 'Come on then, tell me,
 What did you gain from him?'
 When she would say something it felt like
 In a valley of abundant emotion, all words
 were hers
 Each drop in the ocean of love was hers
 I felt as if
 She is staring in the distance, far away,
 oblivious to my presence
 She continues to speak, oblivious to my
 presence

Saying, 'Sir has taught me to write,'
 That' He has taught me to ascend the
 staircase made of words
 That face adorned with words and
 emotions,
 That face chiseled by genuine pain,'
 And now I ask myself,
 Do I feel for him love, devotion or an
 emotion beyond these ?

*The poetess is Deputy District Education
 Officer, Sadiqabad, District Rahimyarkhan*

Smudger

By Zia Mohyeddin

When I look back upon my variegated life I cannot help feeling that the person who touched me the most was not a prep school teacher but a young boy who showed me how to live in the face of adversity. More than anything else he taught me a salutary lesson: do not ever inflict your worries onto others.

In my drama school days in London I was once admitted to a hospital because I was stricken with quinsy. The only other occupant in the ward was a freckle-faced 11 year old lad, who had a weak heart. There were other beds, but they remained unoccupied for the duration of my stay.

He was a comely lad with close-cropped hair and piercing eyes. I have rarely come across an eleven year old with sharper intelligence or a sunnier disposition. His mother had died and he lived with his grandmother, a sturdy Cockney lady, his sole visitor. His name was Ashby. I once made the mistake of calling him Ashby-de-la-Zouche and he winced at my lack of originality. It was obvious that he had his fill of being dubbed as a town. I apologised, and he said "Oh you can't help it. No One can....." But he forgave me with a heart-warming smile.

I owe a great deal to Ashby Salter for acquainting me with some of the oddities of the English Language. It was he who told me that to 'put up or shut up' means to tolerate. "When you put up with someone, it means you can stick him," he went on to say.

"Ha Ha!" I said, "that's daft. Stick him like what? Stick him in the back?" "No, silly," he laughed, "when you stick someone

like that it means you hate him, but to say you can stick him means you like him," "So" I said "you stick me, I stick you?"

"yeah" he beamed.

I had no idea how serious his condition was until he told me one day, quite matter-of-factly, that he had a hole in his heart. "They say I'll make it. Make what?" He said and grinned, "they say a lot of stupid things like every cloud has a silver lining. Clouds don't have linings."

He wasn't bitter when he said this. He didn't know what bitterness meant. The only time he ever twinged with an inner pain was when the night nurse, tucking him in, cooed "Now be good. Remember worse things happened at sea." This was her pet phrase.

"Silly moo," Ashby said after the nurse had left, "Why do worse things happen at sea than on land?" Then, as an afterthought, he said, "What are these worse things?" "Well, Moby Dick, perhaps." I tried to be flippant. "Aw, come on, it's naff. It's like saying 'all other things being equal'. They always say it when they go over me. What other things? And being equal to what?"

There he had the better of me. I could only marvel at his acute sensitivity. He confided in me that it only served to disappoint him when people told him to cheer up. He usually felt pretty cheerful anyway. "I wish they'd stop pitying me", he said, ungrudgingly.

Sometimes I wondered if it was his affliction that gave him a kind of wisdom un-associated with boys of his age. Some of his observations were truly amazing. I had no answer when he asked my why we have to change our clothes during the day when we wear the same pair of pyjamas night after night.

He often used words that I had never heard of. All I could do was to register real surprise and this delighted him no end. 'Hey, smudger' he once said to me and I looked at him quizzically. A 'smudger' meant a friend, a mate; 'brass monkeys' meant cold. "How come?" I asked and he assured me, "It is --- brass monkey's weather, don't you know?" I would learn later that in Cockney lore the racks of cannon balls on board a warship were called brass monkeys.

Other words he taught me were: Rosie Lee (rhyming slang) which meant tea and 'Kate and Sidney' which, of course, was steak and kidney. It certainly evoked the image of a dish more appetizing than our canteen steak and kidney 'pud', which tasted like cat food mixed with chewy stodge.

When I came back to the ward after my operation, Ashby looked after me like an angel. He sat by my bed in case I needed a drink or a tissue. The two nurses who alternated their duties chided him, "Is he paying you a lot of money?" they said flippantly. He remained unnerved. He left my side only when it was time for his grandmother's visit. After she left, he would put the bunch of grapes, which she had brought for him, on my bedside table. I was so touched I nearly sobbed.

I had no idea why he had taken a shine to me. Was it because I was at a drama school and he idolised actors? Or was it because I laughed with him and didn't try to patronise him or treat him as a little boy? It could have been all these things or none. His affection was so unalloyed, so wholehearted that I felt a pang of guilt for not being able to offer him the same amount of unbridled love.

As I got better, his condition took a turn for the worse. He spent most of the mornings in an inner sanctum going through a series of tests and was only brought to the ward late in the afternoon. His face looked flushed and hollow, but he still smiled at my feeble jokes.

When I took leave of him he didn't cry or snivel. "Goodbye smudger, will you come and see me?" he asked, his eyes ever so alert. It was I when shivelled. "Of course, I will," I said, in a gruff voice.

Within a day or two, I had to rush off to a village near Farnham to start work on a farm. It was a two week stint. When I returned to London I went to the hospital to see Ashby. The ward was full of some old patients, but Ashby was not to be seen. I went to the reception. The matron at the desk informed me that the 'poor boy' had gone to his maker.

My 'smudger' had, at last, made it.

The author is currently working as Chairman National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) Karachi. He is famous for his oratory in both Urdu and English. He has acted in international theatrical productions and movies.

Teacher Forever

By *Fakhruddin*

One meets many people on the journey of life...all speaking different languages...people that one can learn a lot from...people whose memories become an important asset of one's life...whose imprints blur with the passage of time....and there are some such special people whose words...whose character is deeply set in our minds...who become role models for us.

Memories associated with them become the light of beacon for us. One such character has been there in my life too, someone whose love, labour and hard work has brought me to the point where I am today; this is something that I myself, my parents and my respected teacher Sir Ismatullah had dreamt of.

I still remember distinctly...that timid little boy in class seventh....who had a strange fear inside of him...the fear of making a mistake..that if I say something wrong...everyone will laugh..If I ask a silly question...what will people say?...That boy wanted to go up on stage...he wanted that he should address people...that people should clap and applaud him..but in spite of desiring all this..he wasn't able to do anything..and then when day to their class came a new teacher...young, determined, nurturing and hard working...he had a strange kind of magnetic charm ...a charm that pulled everyone towards him...that teacher directed his very first question to this boy..and that boy, even though he knew the answer, and wanted to speak, was unable to answer it, this was my first encounter with Sir Ismat.

Sir Ismat's microscopic vision had spotted that restless boy lurking inside of me...the boy who had something to say..who wanted to mingle with people...who wanted to view life from that point, which one can access only after continued hard work..he started to pay me special attention...he started offering free tuition to me and to three other students like myself... he taught us ...how one is to live in society...he initiated not just academic but also co-curricular activities for us... he protected us from the ravishes of time.. and thus our relationship deepened over time...my uncle and older cousins raised some objections saying why I should be spending this much time with him...that this Sir Ismat will turn me into a good-for-nothing...and then I heard Sir Ismat say that ..such is the tragedy of our society..and with this we have to survive..I will never forget the day...when my matric result was announced....and I secured first class first position...that day I had seen an inexplicable sense of peace on Sir Ismat's face that day...the sense of having attained something...the sense of reaching the first milestone of his destination...he gave me fifty rupees cash and a pen...and he wrote on a piece of paper 'I feel proud' (which is Fakhar in Urdu, thus punning on my name) ..that paper is still safe with me...and is a source of the constant renewal of my enthusiasm and passion.

Whatever direction I took in life, his sincerity and passionate commitment was there to encourage me...at every difficult moment he said... 'Fakhar, I know you can do this'...and these words of his imbibe me with a new life and strength.

It was because of Sir Ismat's love and nurturing that I was able to achieve significant success in all-Pakistan-speech-competitions, in essay writing and Urdu poetry at the university level. Seeing all my trophies would bring a new glint in his eyes...this would further encourage me...once he said pointing to my shields and certificates..'You know what! All these are mine...seeing them fills me with a

sense of peace, knowing that I have at least tried to fulfill my role in society.

I learnt from my teacher to spread little joys among people..teach poor and deserving students for free...value your parents...and always have faith in yourself...success will always be yours...I want to be of service...I want to return all that to society...that came my way from Sir Ismat... I want to follow in his footsteps....he , who gave an identity to a timid little boy...even today Sir Ismat is like a shady tree for me, a tree in whose shade I can forget all the hatred, misgivings and bitterness of the world, even if it be for a short while...my pen can never encompass the gifts I have received from him...but my mind can surely follow his path and bring forth the new day.

The one who is in my vision and my mind

My being at my zenith is but proof of his
excellence

If the entire city gathers to see you
That is but a miracle of your matchless
magnificence

A new light is aglow in thine heart,
O Fakhar
What hue is this in your philosophic
thought's essence

The author is a lecturer at the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan

The Morning Show

By Nadia Jamil

At 17 I was an angry, passionate out of control undisciplined lover of literature. Sussanah Harris Wilson was my literature and drama teacher. Watching her dive into the English language excited and inspired me. I followed after her. She taught by example. She was always accessible in and out of the classroom and felt the potential in every student to fall in love with the imagery and power of language and literature.

She loves language so much herself and has this incredible relationship with it , it soon infected me... she would direct me towards theatre and unleash the actor in me! There has been no turning back. To date she is involved in my work and continues to inspire.. I relish the gift of communication and language and have made a career out of it today as an actor and anchor.

Eqbal Ahmad was my social science teacher in college. He taught me to understand my role as a responsible citizen in that my responses to the society around me were immediate and important. He was tough and challenged the student by expecting more from you than you would yourself. Mediocrity was not acceptable and a standard had to be maintained both in the way you wrote your analysis and what you chose to write about. The relevance of historical perspective loomed large in the classroom.

Raza Kazim has taught me how to expose my self through learning and discussion .The importance of discussion and argument between teacher and student help both to expose each other and allow both to learn from one another.

Nani, my maternal grandmother, Begum Qamar Sultana taught me generosity of spirit and the art of loving and opening my heart. Her classroom was life and she learned everyday till her last breath. There is something to be said from learning through human experience, through travel and building bonds with people everywhere you go. Experience and relationships, the building and nurturing of them is a rare and valuable lessons and I was taught it by the finest teacher in the world.

My father is my favourite teacher because he has taught me the importance of humility and how to remain connected to the classroom of God...i.e. nature...in order to remain connected to myself and to get out of the 'self'. It is this humility that really makes you desire to learn continuously and connect to the larger picture. I am part of the same scheme, part of the same classroom that I am learning from. I am teacher, student and lesson all in one. The organic experience that he has exposed me to is still my favourite method of teaching anywhere.

Today when I prepare for my morning show on TV, or when I receive praise for my work as a presenter, I know that my presentation skills and the content, the sensitivity to social and political issues are inspired by my five fabulous teachers.

The author is a stage and television actor. She currently hosts a morning show on a private TV channel.

Teacher as Agent of Change

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A School and a Dream

By Zubaida Jalal

I had barely completed my eighth grade when I first became a school teacher. My father had set up a school in our village in Turbat. A primary school for girls. This was the first girls school in the entire Turbat District, the first community-support school run on a self-help basis. This was in 1982. Turbat then was very different from what it is today. No one had heard of a girls' school. The Imam of the local mosque announced that we were opening the doors to Jahannam by opening the doors of education to these little girls. We trudged right ahead. My sister and I were the first and only teachers at the school for ten years. It was next to impossible to find educated women who could teach in our village.

The Turbat of today is different. The school now has 25 teachers. Teachers from Karachi and Quetta are also recruited now. They are offered higher salaries and the facility of a hostel. School enrolment has grown. Girls are now reading the translation of the Quran and finding out what their rights actually are. People may still be living in a small hut off a shingle road, but they are aware of family planning options. In an area where girls would normally be married off at the age of nine or ten, now single women in their twenties are working as social mobilizers, community health workers and teachers.

It all started with one school, two teachers and a dream.

The liberation of the soul started that afternoon in the compound of my father's house. This was the first time that

girls had had a sports day in my region. Respecting our customs, we arranged for it in the walled compound where all the male servants had been forbidden to come. Hidden from all, Baluch girls took part in sack race and potato race and relay race, just like children anywhere else in the country or in the world do. We got little gifts for winners, simple products that were locally available. When we had invited the then EDO to our event, she had been incredulous. How could Baluch girls have a sports day? She, along with some students' mothers came to attend the event. Once the mothers saw it with their own eyes they realized this was the most natural activity for little children to be engaged in.

From then on we also started a regular sports period in the school.

.Doors were slowly opening to let in the light of knowledge.

School absenteeism can be caused by several reasons. In the case of our school, one reason was that the girls who did not have many clothes or nice clothes like the other girls did, felt embarrassed and would sometimes miss school for this reason. It was time to have a school uniform. We announced to the children that soon they would all come to school in similar clothes.

This perturbed some of the parents who knew that school uniforms in other schools of the country were shalwar suits. They approached us with their concern: "We are not going to send our girls to your school if you expect them to come to school wearing shalwar suits and not our traditional Pashk (frock like garment)." Mindful of the local traditions, which were also our traditions, we had planned to have a sky blue Pashk with white lace as the uniform. To this day that is what the uniform is.

The girls school, an innovation for the region, could only survive if it was rooted in local tradition and if the people

running it were not seen as icons of an alien culture. For this reason my sister and I have tread very carefully, in our dress and conduct, lest anyone point a finger at us and say, "Look what education does to a Baluch woman." To this day I proudly wear my traditional Pashk.

The tribe from which I hail, the Mand tribe, is very conservative. This added to the impact I was able to make in changing mind-sets. Other tribes felt that if girls from the conservative Mand tribe can get an education, may be education for girls isn't something that violates our customs and traditions. This was why I had to be extra cautious in my behaviour, because people were making decisions about their daughters' education based on how I had benefited from education.

I remember once I was talking on the phone to a government official. He made a remark that I found funny and I gave out my typical full-throated laugh. My mother was sitting nearby hearing my conversation. The next time I was about to leave for a meeting my mother gently told me, "Zubaida, you must be very careful. What you say in your innocence can be misconstrued by men. You must guard your words and your reputation." I understood what my mother was referring to. As role models, as one of the few educated Baluch women, I had a heavy responsibility; one careless word and it would be women's education that would get maligned.

When my father started the school, it was my mother and my married sister who went door-to-door, convincing people to send their daughters. While the farmer and servant classes readily agreed, it was the notables who offered the most resistance. In observance of our customs, I, who was unmarried then, did not accompany my mother and sister as an unmarried girl is not supposed to go out of the house.

With my father's magnanimity and support I did go to offices to have meetings with male officials. It was my father's strength and verve that took that pressure off of malicious gossip and never made that a hurdle in my way.

Change in Turbat was made possible by showing people how local customs and modern education can co-exist. For change to be deep and permanent it has to be embedded in the soil, it should breathe as one with the spirits of our ancestors.

The author has been the Minister of State for Education. She has worked extensively for girls' education in her constituency, Turbat Baluchistan. She is currently a Member of the National Assembly

A Stitch in Time

By Samina Sultan

In our village people didn't send their children to school. Children roamed the streets, playing and quarrelling with each other and when they got tired they would come home and fall asleep. Girls would finish household chores and then go to the outskirts of the village to carpet factories or to work in other houses as domestic servants. Education was farthest from their thoughts. A center of adult literacy was set up in the village. The whole village was displeased. 'What? Now they want to educate our children so they can talk back to us and be disobedient?' the elders of the village said. Some even began efforts to close down this center.

While this was happening, the villagers were approached by the management of the center to send girls between the ages of twelve and fifteen to learn to read and write. The response was not very encouraging to begin with. Only a handful of girls agreed to come. Among them was a girl named Irum. Irum was thirteen years old. She used to work as a domestic servant in several homes. The villagers would spread malicious gossip about her visits to these homes, forcing her parents to make her sit at home and not work. This would make it very difficult for them to make ends meet, so they would send her back to work, since they didn't know how else to make ends meet.

The teacher from the literacy center went to Irum's home and got permission for her to attend the center. Irum had soon mastered reading Urdu and was now working on her writing skills. She would help other students with their lessons and generally assist the teacher.

After two years the adult literacy center was no more, but Irum's love for learning had grown. After finishing her chores she would go to the teacher's house to study. The teacher had started her own private school where she gave Irum admission. Irum had now cleared her fifth grade exam. Now studying with the teacher, Irum did the next two classes in one year and had soon passed her eighth grade exam.

Her wedding had been planned in a few months' time to the son of a poor farmer from a neighbouring village. Instead of enrolling for matric, Irum joined a vocational training center about which her teacher had told her. Every step of the way, permission had to be sought from Irum's parents. Each time it was Irum's teacher who spoke to the parents and convinced them with patience and rationality.

Irum soon got married. Her husband was a good man. Soon after their wedding, however, he fell ill. The village doctors were unable to cure him. Irum now took up embroidery and sewing for the villagers in order to earn money for her husband's treatment. The skill she had acquired at the vocational training center was now going to save her husband's life. Since she had been to school, she knew how to teach effectively. Soon girls from the village were coming to her to learn embroidery and sewing. With the money she thus earned, Irum was able to pay for her husband's treatment. He soon got better and now both of them work together.

Irum's parents and other villagers now clearly understand the value of education and of acquiring skills. Her younger siblings are all being sent to school now. Other villagers are also following their example. Irum didn't just move ahead herself, she made her village and her family progress along with her. As a child she had helped her class fellows learn their lessons. Today she is a living lesson on the value of education, for all those who know her.

The author is a teacher in Sheikhpura.

Breaking the Silence

By Misbah Javed Kiani

When I joined a public sector college as a lecturer in Education, I was brimming with ideas. I wasn't even aware that my ideas would be considered so new and revolutionary in a college not so far from my alma mater, where I learned these teaching strategies.

I designed my courses, Seminar in Psychology and Seminar in Curriculum. I also added seminars as a course requirement, in which students have to take a burning issue related to their particular course and research that topic through literature review, gather data through questionnaires and interviews, design logs, pamphlets, brochures and banners, invite guests from the relevant field and engage the media. Until then, these courses had not been planned in such a manner by instructors. Classroom presentation was the more popular format among my colleagues.

This novel idea was a problem for my colleagues and the administration. Some popular comments about my work were: Who ever heard of a seminar at this level? What is Ms. Misbah thinking? Why is she involving her students in such a tough task? This is so irrelevant for pre-service teachers (students). What a waste of students' time and money!

What made matters worse was that I encouraged my students to plan their seminars around sensitive topics such as sexual harassment in the work place, depression among eunuchs due to society's attitude, suicidal ideation among students, the role of punishment in learning. Everyone had a problem with that__ my colleagues, the students' parents, the

college administration_ everyone, except the students because I had created a vision in them. The young minds were fertile ground for these ideas to take root.

Starved for a chance to express themselves, to do some research autonomously, to be heard, my students jumped at the opportunity. Even if I had wanted to back-track, my students were not to be deterred. Not a single one of them.

Huma was one of my students working on the issues of eunuchs. Her mother came to see me one day. She was very disapproving of the whole idea. I tried to help her understand that we are not promoting eunuchs but only trying to create understanding and sensitivity towards a segment of our society that already exists. She did not see it that way. She didn't want such a taboo subject on her daughter's resume. I finally gave in and agreed to switch Huma over to another group.

Huma was of another mind. When I told her of her mother's concern and tried to change her group, she vehemently refused, saying she had done all the spade-work for the seminar.

It was the day of the seminar. We had invited people from the media and the leader of the eunuch community in Rawalpindi. The whole college community turned up, some out of genuine interest and some to witness what they thought would be a total fiasco.

The event was a total success.

When the leader of the eunuch community came on stage and gave a speech, he moved everyone in the audience with a description of his community's problems. He was so moved he didn't know what to say "I have been invited to functions just to dance and sing but I was never... no one from our community was ever invited before on an educational platform like this, no one has ever given importance to our community, but I am very thankful to the instructor and

her students who did this great job by highlighting our problems". He was overwhelmed with emotion.

All my critics were silenced.

It wasn't I as a person but a mind-set that had been victorious that day; the mind-set that believes in talking about issues in order to find their solutions, the mind-set that trusts young people's talent and respects their opinions.

Today, the new director of our college specially requests me to arrange these seminars.

I had taken a risk by opening up taboo subjects, by stepping back and allowing my students to take center-stage, even by pulling out boxes of the packed multi-media projector from the college cupboards. Nobody knew how to use the machine. Nobody wanted to learn and take the risk of damaging it. Except me. I called up the dealers of the machine and requested them to come and show me how to operate it, which they did. That was all it took. A little bit of effort and a whole lot of trust, in my students, and in the process of learning as a critical exploration.

These little efforts make a big difference. Taking this spirit to take challenges forward, my students arranged seminars related to different issues in their teaching practicum in different schools of Islamabad.

The author is a lecturer at the Federal College of Education, Islamabad.

Community, Faith & Discipline

By *Saima Shakeela*

Shazia came to school after an absence of two days. First I thought of ignoring this but then I decided to know the reason for her regular irregularity. As was often the case, she hadn't learned the lesson. I went near her, touched her little shoulders and asked why she had been absent the day before? Firstly, she went pale with fear at my touch. Then after some hesitation she told me, "I was busy with my mother in the fields." I also found out that nobody at home could help her in her studies.

I decided to discuss this with the Head Teacher. She said this is usual for most of the girl students. "We are Government servants, taking our salary regularly for teaching them in class. We do the best we can, so you do not need to worry about what they do at home". I suggested calling a mothers' meeting but my Head Teacher didn't see the point of it. "You just complete your syllabus; that is enough for us."

This answer did not satisfy me. I had faith in the power of change, and in my own ability to trigger that change.

I didn't give up on my Head Teacher and missed no opportunity to gently mention to her that good interaction with the community can be at least a partial solution to some problems such as school dropout and absence. It is true that many schools have School Councils but their role is not positive. I convinced the Head Teacher that an effective School Council (SC) can make the decisions at local level. Finally she agreed.

We sent out invitations for the meeting. Our school is in a poor locality with children of mostly agricultural workers. At first call only five mothers came to school with one member of the SC.

After our discussion with all the mothers, the SC member said, "Although I am educated yet I was not familiar with the importance of the involvement of community." She promised to bring more and more mothers to school within two days through advocacy. On the decided day many mothers gathered at the school. Firstly most of the mothers were not pleased to have been called to school as education was not their first priority. They had other chores to take care of, they grumbled.

The meeting began. First I appreciated their different roles, their work at home along with work in the fields. I sensitized them to the importance of education specially for girls; how it provides them a chance to live a successful and happy life; how an educated woman can train her children in better ways than an illiterate one.

At this, Shazia's mother said, "For us, Madam jee, feeding our children is more important than their education!" The Head teacher answered her, "You have lived a difficult life, don't you want a good life for your children? If you do want this, education is the only way to achieve this."

I pointed out how I and the other teachers at the school are spending a good life with respect in society. After this discussion Shazia's mother had changed her mind.

I told the mothers to just check or ask her children if they have any homework. One mother said, "We can't read. How can we check this?"

I said, "When your children weep, you know right away if they are weeping from hunger or if there is some other

problem; you feel all this while you are not a doctor. You cannot read but you know when your children are lying about not getting any homework. You cannot read but you can listen and ask them to tell you what they have learnt in school. This way you can support your children in their studies.

At the end, most of the mothers were happy with our genuine concern for their children, and all left with the promise to cooperate with us for the sake of their little ones.

After this meeting I started my work with new hope to teach children through activities, to display their work and to make learning meaningful for them. We continued to call the meeting of parents and SC members every month.

On one of the meetings we helped the children prepare some presentations which they would give in front of their mothers at the meeting. Shazia's mother was happy to see her daughter's performance, as were all the others. On seeing that the school was headed in the right direction, some members of the SC provided us a donation of Rs. 30,000. They pledged more donations in future.

The Head Teacher appreciated my effort in initiating a process which would enable us to make our school a model school. We now had a very clear vision in our mind for the progress. It wasn't my vision, nor the Head Teacher's nor the parents' vision. This was our shared vision.

The author is a teacher at the Government Girls Elementary school 653/4 GB Jaranwala.

Education In Balochistan: By The Girls, For The Girls

By Mrs. Hafiza Ghafoor

I think I was born to serve education in general and be a pioneer for girls' education in Balochistan. A simple B.A B.Ed, I have been in the field of education since 1977 in challenging districts such as Kharan and Gwadar. I think I am an ordinary person born to do some extra ordinary things.

From 1977-1997 I was appointed as the head in Kharan Girls High School with only three teachers and very few students. I worked day and night to turn it around, teaching all subjects, even where I was most unqualified. In the process I was setting an example for others to follow. The school became a model school and enrolments multiplied. Then one day in 1997 my husband was posted to Gwadar district. I had no choice but to move. My work here was done.

Gwadar in those days was hot, dusty, sandy and bleak, without any amenities of electricity or water but blessed with the ocean and ocean front where we sat and waded to cool ourselves off in the evenings. I was sent as a head to the Government. Girls High School Gwadar with an enrolment of 250 students from grades Katchi to matric, a handful of teachers who did not go to their classrooms. They did not want to teach; they chatted and sat around but the classrooms with students remained largely abandoned. I was in a state of shock! I thought Oh God this is 'Kharan story' all over again and perhaps worse.

I knew immediately that I had to turn this situation around by example and not just chiding my colleagues from a position of authority.

The situation was so bad because the teachers only taught in Balochi, not in Urdu and certainly not in English at all! This was going to be an uphill task. As a head-teacher I gathered my thoughts and strategized to spend all my time with the students from one class to the next. First the teachers ignored my actions, but very quickly one by one they returned to their classrooms where they belonged and watched me execute a lesson. I have already said that I am a B.A B.Ed and have not had a chance to upgrade my qualifications so again it made me feel inadequate but I had no choice. Each teacher watched me carefully, how I began a subject/topic how I prepared a lesson plan, how I completed the session. Each day the teachers' improved their engagement and gained confidence ...until one by one they came up to me to say, "Madam we can now teach ourselves".

The teachers realized that I am their supporter and I am there to change the school for the better. The students responded positively as finally they could say that we have a school with teachers and teaching! Some thought this is an Urdu medium school (and not just a Baluchi school), some thought that English is taught here better than in most so-called 'English medium' schools; some parents thought the standard of Arabic teaching is also wonderful. The school became truly multi-lingual!

Once the teachers were in the classrooms I could begin to work on the development schemes for the school, announce new posts for the secondary level, arrange transport for teachers, and generally do some justice to education in the remote areas of Pakistan.

Today the school boasts of 1130 students! We have new classrooms; 12 computers (but still no computer teachers). In 2003 I was struck with a profound personal tragedy losing my life partner and my daughter in a terrible accident. The school, teachers and the students became my healers. I lifted myself re-connecting to life in the most meaningful manner.

In 2002 I had begun to prepare for my succession as I had done earlier, but was determined to do a better job and began training Ms. Shahnaz, the current head-teacher of the school. She was an excellent colleague. I urged her to work hard at upgrading her qualifications and to learn all the relevant skills. She did her M.A. M.Ed. She was sent for a four month course to USA with USAID /AED support. She is a wonderful learner. There are three more teachers whom we trained to become school leaders and managers. If we are to succeed we need a winning team, not dynamic individuals working in isolation from each other. My winning team is all set to take over and I am proud of them.

In 2007 I was posted out and became the first proper Deputy DEO (District Education Officer) who was Female for Gwadar. Now my job is to change the culture and atmosphere and working of the EDO's (Executive District Officer) office! My qualifications are in the way of my being promoted properly as I am in BPS (Grade) 17 only where as I ought to be going on to BPS (Grade) 20! I wish experience, skills and wisdom could be considered equivalent to a university degree!

But I can live with this. My students and teachers are my best reward; the parents appreciate my role in transforming the lives of their daughters as Gwadar prepares for an economic and social transformation.

What more could I have been born to do?

The author is Deputy District Education Officer, Gwadar District.

Giving Girls a Chance

By Naheeda Begum

When your heart is oozing with joy, the thunder of claps echoes in your heart too. Wherever you look you see the dance of mirth around you.

This round of applause was for that little girl and also for me.

The child's firm conviction had compelled everyone to be convinced of the status of a teacher.

She couldn't say it often enough: "When I grow up I want to be like Ms Naheed. Because she isn't just my teacher but also my father's teacher. She taught him that I need an education as much as my brothers do."

It all began when I used to teach in an area where sending children to school was not a part of local tradition. I would send messages to people's home everyday to please send their children to school. By and by I had a group of twenty children.

One day in my school, in class two, I saw that bright little Nazir had written his takhti (back slate) while his brother Shabbir had not done his homework. He told me that he had done it, but then his sister erased it. I asked him where his sister went to school. Nowhere. She wasn't being sent to school. That was why she used her brother's takhti, because she too wanted to read and write but was not being sent to school. Their father didn't want her to attend school because she was a girl, he told me.

I didn't sleep well that night. I said my morning prayer and prayed to God for guidance. In the morning I asked Bashir to go fetch his father to come see me. The

father refused, as he did not like to meet women. It was against his honour to do such a thing, he had said.

I wasn't about to give up. I sent the school watchman to get him. Then I requested a local shopkeeper to convey my message. This was an area where people mostly spoke in their regional language, which I didn't know, so I would often ask the watchman to be my interpreter.

Finally Nazir and Shabbir's father came to see me. He was beside himself with anger. 'How can you sit and talk to men!' he said disapprovingly. I silently prayed to God for support as I saw his attitude.

I told him how education was important for his daughter too, not just for his sons. He said what I thought he would say, that it wasn't the done thing, that girls would not have to work so why send them to school? True, she may not have to work ever but she can shape society if she is educated, I told him. The father was now getting interested in what I had to say and in what education had to offer. "How can she shape society?" he asked. I told him how an educated girl will influence her in-laws and raise her own children intelligently. She may play games with them through which the children learn something useful. "I am sure you would like to hear people say that your daughter is an enlightened, organized and educated daughter-in-law."

My prayer had been answered. The father had seen the point I was trying to make. "I promise you in front of these children that I will bring my little girl to your school."

And he did. The whole hall resonated as the sound of clapping rose higher.

The author is a Primary School Teacher at Government Girls Primary School Sanghral, Balakot, Mansehra.

Kiran- The glow from a good Heart

By Nida Alvi

“Dear Nida auntie,
i can play. I am Kiran. I lik to sing the
AaBc. my mother's name is Sana.
love, Kiran
the and”

So read an introductory letter to me from Kiran a talkative little girl who skipped into my Class 1 room some years ago. A few things which had been highlighted for me as I took on my first full-time experience of teaching Class one. Kiran had been held back in Class one from the previous year. She was a “slow learner” and “learning disabled”. But, people made sure they mentioned Kiran had beautiful long hair.

At the time (perhaps not so different from now), Pakistan was at a crossroad. Despite the urgent need of the hour for genuine unity, people were more reluctant than ever to consider themselves part of a larger union. Differences on every conceivable level where you lived, where you worked, where you went to school, whether you were fair or dark abounded across the nation and were becoming more pervasive than ever. Observing my newly arrived class, I heard and watched such sensitivities arise even within their young interactions. The need of the hour for our classroom was indeed no different from that of the country: The need for cohesion and respect for diversity. So I sought to talk to this excited group of youngsters about our differences and the need to embrace them.

The next day, I presented two differently wrapped boxes before the children, asking them to comment on their appearances. I invited predictions about what these boxes might contain? Guesses ranged from toffees in one to marbles in the other old newspapers in one to pieces of foam in the other. After webbing their predictions on the board, I invited two

volunteers up (one of them Kiran) to unwrap both the boxes, revealing the same object ,a cricket ball, on the inside. The classroom was abuzz with discussion.

The children were fascinated. I took this opportunity to lead them gently into sharing their thoughts on how different appearances can have the same heart, feelings and other attributes. With some nervousness, I drew from examples around them people who spoke different languages, lived in different houses and even people who looked different. The children were intrigued.

What followed was each of them receiving a sheet of paper with a massive variety of different (skin) colours to choose from and create a collage. Initially, children were most interested in finding a 'matching' colour for their skin and then looking around for colours 'matching' their friends. They tirelessly combined colours and decided how those different colours would be incorporated into their larger picture. As they worked, I asked them to share what they were creating. A burst of colour traveled around the classroom as each of them carefully pointed out all the different colours they had selected and what their image was. I paused and asked, “What if we'd only had one colour to choose from let's say just brown. How would your pictures have looked then?” How instant and unanimous their reaction was about their pictures being incomplete and not as interesting! It didn't take much to hook them back into our earlier discussion of how each of our differences is so essential to keeping our classroom and our world colourful and lively. The children, including little Kiran, had been guided down a path of reflection. Unlike the other children though, Kiran never really brought up the subject of differences again for the rest of the year, until the last day of school.

A year later, Kiran, with her “slow learning” and “learning disability” was ready for Class two. What remains my most poignant memory of Kiran, however, is her

skipping into class on the last day of school just as she had at the beginning of the year with a letter in one hand and her “long, beautiful hair” reduced to the shortest of haircuts. When asked what had happened to her hair, she remarked quite matter of fact, “But Nida Auntie. Sara (Kiran's cousin who had recently been diagnosed with cancer) woke up and had no hair. She looks different, like we talked in the class a hundred days ago. She's my friend and I don't know what happened. I want to know how she feels so I can tell the other children to hug her too, like we said a hundred days ago. She's still the same and so much fun, just like we said! My hair's ok Sara will make a wig with it and we can play!” With that last chuckle, Kiran stuffed a paper into my hand and ran off to join her friends.

“Dear Nida Auntie, thank you. And you taught us for more than a hundred days and I love you Nida Auntie and good day. Love, Kiran.”

So read my goodbye letter from Kiran.

The Kohistani Clay

By Sultanat Naseem

In the year 1999 I was posted as District Education Officer to District Kohistan, which is a rugged mountainous terrain. This is where River Indus and the Karakoram Highway meander into the distance, side by side.

When I took charge, only 5% out of the 365 schools in my district were functional. The rest were like haunted houses. In consultation with my higher officers, I developed a plan of action. I sent out letters to all PTC teachers on their home addresses and called their meetings in each of the three tehsils.

In the meetings I also requested the EDO to be present. I tried to ensure the presence of a maximum number of teachers. As the schools were located at a distance from each other, I set off after the morning prayers. I would visit one school and then go back to the office to take care of official matters and then set out to the next school.

After the meetings, these issues stood out the most:

- Low attendance of female students
- High drop-out rate
- Lack of school supplies, books, uniforms etc.

We found out that people in Kohistan don't think too highly of girls' education; even if they send their daughters to school, they don't bother to get them uniforms etc.

To find a solution to the problems we had identified in the first meeting, I called a second meeting. What made me

particularly happy was that this time there was greater attendance.

All of us, with the support of parents, specially mothers, came up with these solutions:

We shouldn't insist on uniforms for now, but only lay stress on personal hygiene.

Since the girls liked to play with clay toys, clay would be used to make English alphabet, Urdu letters and digits to aid learning.

For each female student, a plot measuring two square feet was allotted for her to write on using a chalk.

For the girls to sit, 'cushions' were made by filling plastic sacks with grass and adorning them with Kohistani embroidery.

These decisions were implemented with follow up visits of the school. Girls who were once only working in the fields or taking care of younger siblings now started to attend school. School enrollment and attendance started to increase. I was grateful for the response to my efforts and was humbled by my success.

By the time I was transferred out of Kohistan, according to the official data, 80% of the schools were now functional, compared to the 5% that were functioning when I took over charge.

Even today, after so many years, teachers from that region tell me how Kohistan is not the Kohistan it used to be, how enrollments have gone up. While local traditions are still in tact, girls are attending school too.

I feel I was fortunate enough to have worked with a wonderful team, along side seniors who supported my vision. My vision was simple and solid, like the mountains it was inspired by; my vision was to involve everyone to come up with a plan, and to look for locally viable solutions. My plan

worked because it sprung from the land,
because the clay alphabets and digits we
made were made from Kohistani clay.

O youth of the nation, let's get some
work done,

Come let's develop again this town
in ruin,

Come, let these shackles on souls
now be undone,

Come get some work done! Get
some work done! (Majeed)

*The author is a Head Mistress at the
Government Girls High School, Bairan
Gallee, Abbottabad.*

Learning As I go along

By Abida Shaheen

My first posting was at Government Girls High School, Kaghan. Soon after I was posted to Garhee Habib Ullah. Here I had to teach Math to classes ninth and tenth, when I myself had only studied Math till class tenth. How did I cope? I poured over the books late into the night to gain mastery over the concepts that I had to teach the next morning. In the morning when I faced my students I was able to satisfy them. I was more patient with their difficulties because I myself had found it all so difficult until the night before!

I was posted to a new school in Hamaira where I stayed for the next twelve years as the in-charge and the Math teacher for classes 6th-8th and the English teacher for class eighth. With the permission of the Education Office we started classes for class ninth too. The class ninth girls used to have their classes in the courtyard outside as there was no room available for this new class. I was teaching them English and Math while the rest of the teachers had taken up other subjects.

At this point the school in-charge was a lady who had grown irritable due to arthritic pains. She had some reservations about allowing the class ninth girls to attend our school. She would say that they are not our responsibility. With great difficulty I had these girls enrolled in the Government Girls High School, Sajkut. While the girls were enrolled in that school I still assumed the responsibility to help them prepare for their exams. Even in the winter break I would go by myself and tutor these girls for their class ninth exams.

The Sajkut principal too had enrolled these girls very reluctantly. But all of that changed when their result came out. The group of ninth graders showed a 100% result! After that the Sajkut principal was herself sending messages for the girls to rejoin her school in class tenth.

I still remember Zahida who had failed the class sixth exam. She came with her mother, promising to try harder and begging to be promoted to the next class just this once. I took the decision to let her go forward against the advice of my colleagues. Sure enough, Zahida improved her performance in Math and got the confidence to do well in other subjects too.

Just as the system had trusted my ability and given me tasks that I was not really qualified for, in the hope that I would rise to the challenge, I too like to place my trust in my students before they produce results. I know that they will do the best that they can, just as I did years ago when I was appointed to teach Math to class ninth and tenth.

The author is a Senior English Teacher at Government Girls High School Kathwal, Abbotabad

Like Sugar in Milk

By Ibadullah

This happened when I was rendering my services as a science teacher at a Federal Government Boys High School in a far flung part of Gilgit. My school is situated at the edge of River Gilgit, on Ghazar Road. It is adorned with multiple varieties of plants and flowers.

As I reached school one fine day, on the 3rd of June, 2005, I was surprised to see some strange events transpire. It was as if someone had cast an evil eye on our wonderful school.

It seemed as if the flowers in the school lawns were no longer in bloom, nor were the cherry trees laden with bright red cherries anymore. All seventh and eighth graders from the school who belonged to a certain religious sect were standing on the road demanding some change in their textbook. There is no dearth of stones in our area, so they had conveniently pelted the road with stones from all sides. Some of the students were provoking others by raising emotionally rousing slogans.

All the teachers, the head master and the school administration had reached the spot and were trying to convince the students to discontinue the protest while the police were threatening them for the same purpose. All efforts so far had proven ineffective. In fact the students were starting to get more hostile.

At this point entered someone frail but with the eye of an eagle and with sure steps like a lion. He went towards the students, all of whom gathered around him like moths around a candle. Nobody knew what magic wand the teacher, Sir Sultan Wali, waved but soon after the students

bowed down their heads and left the site of the protest. This impressed the other teachers and the administration no end. He was asked how he did it.

It was, he said, a combination of his love, sincerity, sense of justice and a certain kind of sweetness due to which the students could just not say no to him. It was interesting that the teacher didn't even belong to the same religious group as the protesting children.

"It is the connection between the hearts; the more love you have for someone in your heart, the more impact your words will have on them," he said.

Behind that one miraculous moment were weeks and months of effort; behind it were all those moments that Sultan Wali had spent playing with the children, hearing them out, making them feel important, instead of sitting in the staff room.

The author is currently a student of MEd at the Federal College of Education, Islamabad

My Young Leaders

By **Samia Doggar**

Parts of Pakistan are at war. Due to the current political situation, the people of Swat have been displaced and now are living in camps. These people are homeless in their own homeland. I strongly feel that we must take action before these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) can start to feel neglected. We all pray for them and for our country, but we all know that that alone may not be enough. We need to give them a sense of our presence and support. They want our moral support-- some consoling words, some gestures of love and care.

Seeing the plight of these helpless people one day I and one of my colleague Ms Naian Sayed gave an idea to our class (BS Education 1st prof.) to organize a Donation Collection Camp in the college campus. Soon enough, a 12 day donation camp was arranged by my class. Some of the volunteer boys decided to visit the IDP camps as well as those troubled areas to distribute the goods collected for the helpless people. There was some risk involved in making such a journey but my young leaders voluntarily decided not only to give them gifts but also to spend some time with them to raise their spirits.

All the boys and girls, who were a mere seventeen to eighteen years of age themselves, participated in this Donation Camp for twelve days with great zeal. They encouraged the other students of the college also. They had no qualms about donating their own personal belongings. Their intrinsic motivation, sensitivity and unconditional love for the IDPs was an inspiration not only for others students but also for us teachers.

I myself was overwhelmed with emotion as I realized there was great hope for our nation because we had these young men and women __ committed, strong and fearless in their generosity. Through all this activity, this was their gift to me_ Hope.

The author is a lecturer at the Federal College of Education, Islamabad. She also conducts trainings for teachers of science

Saira's Search

By Mrs Zarina Aijaz

The imam of our local mosque lived near our house in Rawalpindi. His daughter Saira would often come over to our place to get cold water. I would often chat with her. It turned out that this girl in her teens was not going to school; she could not even read the Arabic alphabet or the Quran.

I was shocked to hear that. I offered to teach her to read the Quran. She happily agreed and regularly started coming to my house in the evenings.

Saira worked her way through the Qaida first. Then she finished reading the Quran, and then read it a second time. She was now reading the Quran beautifully and also learned her prayers and Kalimas (Muslim formulas). She was a keen learner.

She moved from reading Arabic to writing Urdu in no time. The next milestone was learning to stitch! She not only learnt to do it but also started her work at home, earning a little extra money for herself.

This plump and fair skinned girl was a sponge for new leaning__ she absorbed it all. If God forbid life presents any difficulties, Saira had a skill that she could fall back on. When Saira had first come to us she was very simple and shy. As she learnt to read, write and stitch, she gained a new poise and confidence.

People often ask me how I managed to make time for Saira, being a working woman who also has a family to take care of. My answer is: I did manage, because Saira is family too, because at that point in time, I was the only window to learning that Saira had. I wanted to leave that window open for her.

Saira was in her teens when she started coming to me to learn. It just goes to show that age is no bar if someone is truly keen to learn something new.

The author is a stitching instructor at the Women Welfare and Development Center, Islamabad

Say Yes to School, Say Yes to Change

By Misbah Rani

Thin and sultry with sunken cheeks and braided hair, dull eyes and a dupatta on her head; a worn out parandee (three bunches of colourful thread knotted together, worn woven into plaits), peeping from underneath the dupatta. Often barefoot, roaming here and there, sometimes playing in the sand. As soon as anyone would call out to her, she would disappear in the little quarter.

This is my second grade student Shabana Durran Khan. Her father has been the night watchman at our school for the last fifteen years. During daytime he sells socks, caps and other stuff on the roadside. Durran has five daughters and a son. He has to do two jobs to make ends meet.

Our school Sanjan Nagar is an institution distinct for the co-curricular and academic opportunities that it offers to students. There are music classes. There is a veggie-patch, where vegetables are grown to help children understand important concepts in science.

Near one of the two gates of Sanjan Nagar school is a narrow pathway that leads to Durran Khan's quarter. Shabana Durran, eleven years of age, stands clutching the worn out curtain hanging at the entrance of the quarter. She looks on at other children who study or partake of other activities in the school. Sometimes, just to get attention, she picks up lunch from other children's boxes, or comes and quietly and stands behind someone.

I saw all this happening for several months. And then one fine day my feet carried me to Durran's quarter. As I entered I saw the mother cooking something in a pot, while Shabana was kneading the dough to make chapatti. Some flour had spilled over the bowl. As they saw me, Shabana's mother and her sisters, a little older than her, all ran to call Baba Durran.

No, I wasn't there to make a complaint of any sort, I told them, to ease their apprehensions. The first part of the conversation with Durran Baba was very predictable. I asked him why his girls weren't sent to school, he said because they were Pathans and sending girls to school was not what Pathans liked to do. Two of his daughters were already married. Shabana's older sisters were betrothed to boys in their village and would be given a send-off reception as soon as Baba Durran had some money in his hand.

Anyway, he said, they don't speak much Urdu, so how can they attend a school like this? I said what I had prepared to say: It is a girls' school, Shabana doesn't even have to go anywhere to attend school, and she can study for free. Baba Durran got thinking for a minute: But she is too old to start school now, he said, and our relatives will be angry with us. I asked Shabana if she would want to attend school. The quiet girl looked at her father with such pleading in her eyes that the old man thawed a little. He asked for some time to think. This was a good sign.

Sure enough, Durran Baba came to me one fine morning: 'So when can Shabana start school?'

'From tomorrow, in the evening shift,' I said, and sealed the deal.

At 1.45pm that day as the morning shift came to an end, I went and told the school head mistress about Shabana. The Head Mistress had many concerns: The girl was too old to sit with the nursery children, she didn't know enough to sit in class 3 or 4, what if she hits the younger children that she studies with? I convinced her that I will

teach her my way in my nursery class. Permission was granted.

I quickly procured her school uniform and took it to Shabana's quarter. The next day Shabana stood hesitating outside nursery class, with her father. I took her inside and settled her in. The first few days Shabana kept to herself, looking rather confused the whole time she was in class.

Slowly she started to respond and in no time she had assumed a leadership role in class! In her artwork, Shabana's selection of colours was so fascinating that I couldn't stop looking at her paintings. She got an A grade in the final exams. Both her parents came to collect her result, proud of their daughter's achievement.

Now that Shabana knew her alphabet and phonics, we prepared such worksheets for her for the next class as would enable her to cover the major milestones of class prep and class one in one academic year.

I once again visited the quarter and asked Baba Durran to send Shabana to me an hour before the evening shift began, so I could help her with her reading, vocabulary and spellings etc. Or I would make her write backwards counting in the sand.

At the end of the year Shabana was tested on the first grade syllabus. To our great joy and surprise, Shabana had cleared both classes in one year securing a B grade!

I asked Shabana to come to me during the summer break so she could progress fast enough to be able to sit in a class better suited for her age. Shabana is now 13 years of age. She is brimming with confidence. She wears a clean dupatta and keeps her hair in a neatly oiled braid. She speaks fluent Urdu and can easily follow instructions given in English.

Shabana's family is pleased with their decision to send her to school. When her older sisters visit, they come to see me. They tell me that they want to send their children to school too. Baba Durran is happy to let Shabana study and leave marriage for later. Shabana's coming to school has brought all this change in her family.

The journey is not yet over. Shabana needs our support so she can one day be a regular student enjoying the company of other girls her own age.

The author is a nursery teacher at the Sanjan Nagar Public Education Trust School.

The Story of a Musician

By Nafees Ahmed

In the Indo-Pak sub-continent, the ustad-shagird model of teaching of music involves a strong interpersonal effort. Teacher (Ustad) individually works with serious students (Shagird). Teacher meets his/her student every day, sing, ask him/her to perform or sing back, and work diligently. The Ustad-Shagird model is based on the guru-shishya tradition, lineage, or parampara, which is a spiritual relationship in traditional where teachings are transmitted from a guru (teacher) to a 'śi?ya' (disciple). It is believed that this relationship, based on the genuineness of the Ustad or guru, and the respect, commitment, devotion and obedience of the student, is the best way for subtle or advanced knowledge to be conveyed.

Time and again musicians, with exposure to music teaching in the West, and academics, particularly those trained in the tradition of Western music, have raised questions on the appropriateness and relevance of this model. I, being a product and adherent of this model, cannot disavow its validity and meaningfulness. After all this model has succeeded in transmitting and sustaining our glorious musical heritage through centuries and whatever music we know today has come to us through this model. At the same time, I cannot, ignore out the troubles and hardships, I have personally experienced, like any other student initiated in to music through this model.

In Pakistan, the best teachers, following the traditional model of teaching, are too often primarily performers and then teachers. These teachers follow how their

teachers taught them. One should fairly concede that these teachers have no idea of education theory, curriculum development and modern teaching techniques, coaching and mentoring, which could help developing them into a more creative, thoughtful and well-informed teacher.

When I decided to teach music in an academic setting to student in Pakistan for whom music was not the first career option, I was faced with a serious dilemmas for so many reasons; the teaching of music always took place in the traditional and untransposable Ustad-Shagird model with its peculiar conventions; the Ustadi Shagirdi model was the only proven way for teaching of music; teaching of music was never part of our academia; there was not even an ordinary model or reference point available to commence teaching of music as an academic exercise, the isolated efforts by individuals for teaching of music in somewhat academic style never brought fruition. What further compounded my dilemma was the realization that my prospective students, deeply grounded in a modern learning tradition, would find it very hard to orient themselves to Ustad-Shagird model, if I tried to initiate them in to it.

On top of all these issues, I was entrusted, as a Head of Department of Music at the National academy of Performing Arts (NAPA), with the task of developing a two-year long course in music and producing 'good results', I repeat 'good results'. Whereas the Ustadi Shagirdi model requires from the student undefined length of learning with no surety of 'good results'.

Music has never been accepted as a respectable career by a large segment of the Pakistani society. It is not only placed very low in the social index, for whatever reasons, but also vehemently suppressed. While taking up the challenge of developing and imparting a course on music, I prepared myself for all possible rancour, which I already suffered throughout my life

for being associated to this supposedly disrespected art. In the past, sometime I also failed to estimate the density of strength required to sustain in this field, so, there were moments in life when I thought of giving up music. But this time, I overcome the fear of being marginalized by my excitement to become a pioneer in setting the foundation of a new method of music teaching in Pakistan.

Driven by my enthusiasm and supported by my fellow musicians, academics, intellectuals and friends, I was able to prepare a curriculum, formulate syllabus, develop courses, identify teaching techniques, and gather resource material for imparting a three-year long course on music. Today, NAPA, in its fifth years of existence, has been able to institutionalize teaching of music in to successful teaching model.

To my surprise, my initial fears were allayed by my young students. They, with their love for studying music, have changed my thinking altogether. Despite all discouragements, the youth have strongly expressed and demonstrated their ambition, resolve and readiness to learning art of music and becoming professional musician, composer and even musicologist. This unexpected response has turned my nightmares into a responsibility to dedicate myself to teaching of music.

With my involvement in teaching music to youngsters, I am enjoying a delightful experience. I have discovered for myself that the quest for learning music predominantly exists among our youth. However, there have been prohibitions in allowing the youth to exercise their right to choose. Had the earlier generations been allowed choosing their cultural and aesthetics pursuits, we would have carried a different image in the world today. I think we still have the chance to make a comeback if we start allowing our youth to engage in their pursuits and facilitate them by providing proper guidance and means to

seek knowledge in their areas of interests. I am very optimistic that our enthusiastic youngsters can ensure our 'cultural rescue' and help recover our lost cultural status in international arena.

The author is the Head of Music Department, National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) Karachi. He is also a renowned sitar player

Portrait of a Child Domestic Labour Student

By Saima Kanwal

Where to find them: Sabeen was a 13 year old student in my beautician class. Her story is the story of so many other female students at the vocational training center.

Duties: She has four other siblings that she has to take care of; she has to cook and clean in the house.

Rights: None (Her education or her beautician training is not a priority for her family. So much so that she is not allowed to even open her school bag at home, since that would keep her away from all the other chores she has to do.)

Personality Profile: Quiet, withdrawn, wanting to hide or to be invisible

Popular Teacher Intervention: I paid extra attention to Sabeen when I found out her story. We celebrated her small milestones in class with generous rounds of applause from her class fellows. For example we would all clap for her if she did neat work.

Current status: Sad. Really sad.

Prognosis: I see her innocent face and big round eyes light up with joy. There is hope yet.

The author is an instructor for the beautician classes at the Aagahi Center, Sohan, Islamabad.

Teacher as Classroom Practitioner

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A 360 Degree View of the World

By *Ameena Saiyid*

I am so glad to have an opportunity to look back at my time as a school girl because it gives me such pleasure to look back at those days and really brings a smile on my face.

My piece is about my teacher of English, Mr. Dolmen at my school, Karachi Grammar School.

I used to look forward to the English class and always felt comfortable and relaxed in this class because of the approach and manner of our teacher. In those days, most teachers were quite authoritative and patronizing but not our English teacher. He did not talk down to us or put us down. Unlike others, he treated us as equals. For example, he did not insult our intelligence by handing down to us his versions of facts, his opinions, and his conclusions. He would encourage us to think for ourselves, do our own research from different sources, process and analyze the information gathered, and then form our own opinions and draw our own conclusions.

If we had to do a project on a given subject, he would encourage us to read books by different authors with different perspectives on the same subject so that, on balance, we had a chance to form our own opinions and not be brainwashed by one school of thought. By constantly encouraging us to read, he tried to equip us with a dynamic and independent means of searching for, discovering, examining, and profiting from knowledge. We were not burdened by ideological concerns or

dogmas and our natural curiosity for learning was facilitated.

Whenever any of us pupils did something well like answering a question or writing a good essay or even a good part of an essay, our teacher would praise our efforts wholeheartedly and repeat and read what had been written to the whole class and explain why it was worth learning from. In this way, he not only encouraged us to try and do our best rather than try to be the best, but also used the good work as an example for the rest of us. He thus taught us through the work of our classmates which was very effective. He would choose the strong points of our work and discuss those with the rest so we all felt encouraged and motivated to learn from each other.

The minds of children are like snowflakes; no two of them are alike and yet each is perfect in its beauty. Our teacher recognized and understood our differences and found good in our work in its different ways. He encouraged individuality, originality, and creativity. This is so important for teachers to understand and implement because creativity in children sits like a winged creature ready to soar but falls prey to the heavy-handedness of our educational system.

Ameena Saiyid is the Managing Director of the Oxford University Press Pakistan

A Chemical Reaction

By Kamran Hussain

Whenever Sir Imran would enter the class, he always had a smile on his face. We were a few days away from our exams then. Two three boys in our class were trying to evade the teacher and he had decided to stay out of class because they hadn't done their homework, not because they weren't intelligent, but because they just never liked Chemistry.

After taking the attendance Sir Imran wanted to know where Ahmed and Ali were; he had seen them this morning. Obviously, none of us said anything, since we did not want to tell on our friends. We told him that we had been asked to find out the properties of carbon dioxide gas, and we were completely at a loss. Sir smiled at the whole class and said, "Dear Students, what's there to worry about? Just wait and we will find out the properties of carbon dioxide gas."

He sent a boy to the school garden to get some limestone, where the gardener was lining the trees with limestone to save the trees from insects etc. When the boy returned, Sir poured some water in a drinking glass, and added some limestone to it. Bubbles started to rise from the mixture and the glass turned hot. When he lit a match stick and tossed it over the glass, the fire was put out.

He asked us, "What did I do? And what did you feel?" Everyone gave their opinion. We were totally engrossed in this experiment. Sir told us that mixing water and limestone led to a chemical reaction due to which the temperature of the new compound rose; we could tell this because the glass had heated up. The match stick was extinguished because there was

carbon dioxide emanating from the compound; fire needs oxygen to keep burning and carbon dioxide puts out fire. He told us how the process will be represented in mathematical form.

This chemical reaction shows us that carbon dioxide is colourless, odourless and tasteless, it puts out fire, he told us. After that day we started entertaining the possibility that we might actually master Chemistry.

When we got this question on our exam, the result was amazing, all of us got it perfectly right!

A change had come over all of us, which was no less than a chemical reaction. We came to be friends with Sir Imran. He would tell us important facts, quotations etc. We would ask questions and he would give us the answers or suggest solutions.

We got so enamoured by our studies that we came to strike a friendship with books. Sir would recommend different books to us. Not only would we purchase these books, but we would also read them and then exchange views with Sir Imran. May be this was what strengthened my academic roots.

Today I have done my M.Sc in Physics. I still remember his words to me, 'Kamran, I have full confidence in you.' I will never break his trust and will prove that true to my name Kamran (successful), I will be successful in life.

The author is currently a student of BEd at the Federal College of Education, Islamabad.

A Winner All the Way

By Asima Shaheen

Zain was the most well-known third-grader. Any teacher who entered the classroom would be compelled to say, "Zain! Stop doing that!" And how could Zain be Zain if he wouldn't be up to some mischief or the other? Zain was always being discussed in the staff room and in the principal's office. How do you solve a problem like Zain? His performance was consistently poor; He never scored more than 10-15% marks in any exam, in any subject.

With a smiling face and shining eyes, a mushroom-style hair cut, wearing the blue uniform shirt and tan trousers, this little bundle of energy kept everyone on their toes.

Ms. Saira, tall and graceful, was an inspiration to the other teachers. She wanted to take up this challenge and find a way to effectively reach Zain. She noticed that criticism had made Zain obstinate and rude. She decided to go about it systematically. She set up a meeting with his parents. It was then that she found out that his parents were separated.

Seeing that Zain was good at sports, she started to give his name to participate in different games. No other teacher had thought of encouraging Zain to join a team formally because he lacked discipline and may have created problems in the team. But now, because of him, the school won in cricket and the 100 meters race in an inter-school competition. All the students were awe-struck by his performance and heartily cheered for him. Zain was on cloud nine when he received the trophy for his school!

A few months after that when the December tests result came out, Zain had again failed in all subjects. As usual.

But there was one difference. This time he had tears in his eyes. For the first time, he was embarrassed by his result. Zain now knew the sweet taste of victory and he wanted more of it, not just in sports but also in academics. Ms. Saira consoled him and offered to help him improve his test results. He put his nose to the grind and....

At the end of the session, the school saw Zain get an A grade. He also got 'The Shining Star of the Year Award' for showing tremendous improvement. Zain had discovered the joy that comes from working hard and winning. He was all set to be a winner all the way.

The author is a teacher at the Federal Government Junior Model School, F-6/3, Islamabad.

An Effective Teacher

By Shakila Bibi

I was appointed as subject specialist in Civics at the Government Girls Higher Secondary School Khanpur. There were no English subject specialists in the school, so the administration asked me to teach English in addition to my own subject. And thus I began teaching English.

I found that the girls lacked the skill to even write a proper sentence. There were one hundred and fifty students in 1st year, most of them lacking basic English language skills. I was aware that a lot of our students don't do well in English as they don't have a sound base. These girls needed help in both spoken and written English. I started with verb tenses and instructed the girls to keep their dictionaries handy so they can look up difficult words.

The school principal was also aware that the standard of English language was not very high in our school. She often talked to me about how our students' record in English was not very encouraging. This is a common problem in our rural schools where English language specialists are hard to find. I assured her that it was a problem that could be solved.

I had a group of a hundred and fifty students. I had to have discipline in the classroom, yet keep a friendly atmosphere. I also started from the basics of grammar so they had a strong sense of the language to build on. And I had to test them very frequently on small sections of the text or syllabus to help them gain mastery over the rules of grammar and the new vocabulary. I had to be well prepared for class myself and I had to keep throwing questions their way to ensure that this class of a hundred and fifty was not falling asleep. I set up parent

teacher meetings. I encouraged competition among the girls. I tried anything and everything to engage my students in their own learning.

Slowly my students were starting to show results. Their grades in the written tests were improving as were their spoken English skills.

I got further reassurance when an inspection team came to school to monitor children's progress in each subject. They appreciated my efforts and commented on my girls' English language skills. We were getting some where.

Then the final test came. My girls had their final exam. Classes had ended in April to give students time to prepare for their exams in May. On the day of their exam, I waited outside their examination hall. As they came out one by one, I saw satisfaction on their faces as they walked up to me and exclaimed, 'Ma'am the paper was so easy!' These words meant all the world to me!

Not only that, the children also requested me to teach them English the next year too! This was the most unforgettable moment of my life. I, who wasn't even an English teacher had been able to get results from these students.

The author of the story is a subject specialist in History and Civics with Masters degrees in International Relations and Political Science in the North Western Frontier Province

Baby Steps to a Life's Journey

By Atia Sarwat

“Good, better, best never let them rest, until the good is better and the better is the best! When some one sows a seed he anxiously waits for the first sprouts to appear. If the result is more than one's expectations, feelings of achievements abound. I have tasted that feeling. Today I feel that my life has a purpose.

This story is about 10 year old Shehryar who had a keen interest in his studies. His father had a rent-a-motorcycle business. He wanted to make his son a successful man. Shehryar was in class fourth and I was the vice principal of Talha Public School. The school opened in 2004 in a backward area. My goal was to shield my students from inertia and to keep the struggle alive in them. There were some children who had no word recognition, like the child in the movie “Tary Zameen Par”. One of them, a boy suffered from polio in his right arm and was not working but he was immensely interested in studies. Miss Samina, a colleague, tried and he was able to write and work with his left hand at grade level. These children were brimming with enthusiasm, waiting for that one little nudge to help them surface.

At the time of his admission to the school, Shehryar could not even write his own name. He failed the entry test. It was a new school and the management did not want to admit such weak students. The principal decided to hand over this case to me. I was now responsible for the future of this one child.

After giving it some thought, I decided to call his parents. I had thought of

a radical plan, now I needed the approval of Shehryar's parents. I wanted to start this fourth grader from grade one all over again. I made the parents understand that this backtracking was essential to give their son a solid academic base. They thought long and hard. The idea of their ten year old sitting with first graders worried them. Finally, they decided to put their trust in me for a better future for their child.

During the initial period, many times Shehryar lost his confidence when other students and local people targeted him with cruel humor. I empowered Shehryar to say that there is no age limit to start reading. I gave him an extra hour after school timings to gain mastery over his syllabus because my target was to promote him to the next class soon. Shehryar and I succeeded. In a few months he was sitting with second graders.

Now understanding the basics of language and math, Shehryar confidently moved through classes three and four at a good pace. He appeared in the class five examination. He passed class five with good marks and started sixth then seventh and eighth class. Shehryar is now studying with passion. His parents are very happy to see him on his way to a better future.

I have now left the school but I am in touch with the community. Shehryar's parents keep me informed about his progress in school. While I was writing this story I contacted Shehryar's parents for their comments. They said: 'You took a good decision for his bright future, otherwise he would have become a failure.'

Shehryar still remembers me and treasures a piece of chocolate I had once given him as a reward in class two. Shehryar is confident that armed with a sound education, he will be a good and successful human being. Inshallah (God Willing)

Atia Sarwat. is currently working as a teacher in Human Development Foundation in Rahim Yar Khan.

Basking in Urdu

By Syeda Arifa Zahra

It is commonly believed that people who do their Masters degree in Urdu, Islamic Studies or Persian are sort of at a lower rung of the ladder, incapable etc. That is precisely why I chose to do my Masters in Urdu__ no, not because I was incapable but because the choice seemed like a nice and rebellious one! But seriously, I studied and taught Urdu because I wanted us to take pride in our intellectual heritage with full confidence.

You cannot think without a language; and for the reference point of the thought paradigm to be our own, we must know our own language. We must not speak or study Urdu apologetically; nor must it be taught to our children as a second priority. I studied Urdu to be content with myself.

My unique teaching stance would be my inclination to love people more for their weaknesses than for their achievements. That is why in my classroom there is always room for students to be confused.

I taught a course in Urdu Literature at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). The first time I taught the course, this Urdu course was taught almost in English! I taught them to relish the Urdu language, its sounds and nuances. I would tell my students about the life and times of the Urdu poet Ghalib and then invite them to explore his poetry. People tune out of Urdu as soon as the teacher starts off with 'The poet here says..' as if the poet had personally come and whispered to the teacher what he really meant! Since the poet has done no such thing, my students make their own meaning from poetry.

What was important was for my students to appreciate that Urdu literature was like literature in any other language, meant to be enjoyed. Urdu spellings and writing will not be useful for my students; it was developing an ear for the language that was important. Once the thought would reach them, the language would come naturally too.

I would ask them to read a verse five times and make some meaning out of it. If they found a word or phrase particularly difficult, I would supply the meaning. In the initial writing assignments I gave them permission to use the English word if they couldn't think of an apt Urdu word to convey their meaning. By the end of the course, there wasn't a single student using a single English word.

As word spread about my course on Ghalib and Faiz, another Urdu poet and activist, other faculty members would request to sit in on my class too. Students who had already taken the course would want permission to come and sit every now and then. This was a generation of what I call the 'burger kids', totally aligned with western language, mannerisms and values.

At the end of the course these under-grad students were writing awe-inspiring theses on topics such as: 'Faiz and I: Coercion and its Reaction.' My students reached this level because they were allowed to engage with the texts at a deeper level; I didn't make them swallow a pill called Urdu Poetry, I gave them opportunities to wrestle meaning out of the verses.

Of course learning Urdu has its practical benefits too. My student Esa Khokar later told me that he managed to secure a job at a bank because he could impress the panel with what he had to say about Urdu poetry. (It came up when the interviewers saw the Urdu course mentioned on his resume). The closer you bring education to real life, the more deeply

embedded it will be in the students' mind and the farther reaching its impact will be in the life of a student.

When I was teaching at Lahore College my colleagues were perturbed by my teaching practice. 'All the students will fail the exams, she is not teaching the syllabus!' they would tell the management with wide-eyed anxiety. As it happened, I have had a 100% result throughout my teaching career. I was teaching the syllabus but with a slant towards real life references.

I used to give heaps of written assignments, all asking them to think. I would give a short statement and ask them, 'What do you understand from this?' I felt that verbal communication and discussion lacks the art of discipline. If your words and thoughts are in written, concrete form, then you can fine-tune them too.

Among my own mentors I would like to mention the principal of Government College, Dr. Nazir Ahmad. He taught me how to live breaking the orbit of your own self. I have learnt to live from a duck; how it swims in water yet keeps its neck and chest out of the water. When it reaches ashore, it flaps its wings to shake out all water, keeping itself pure and pristine.

The author has taught extensively at Lahore College where she was also the Vice Principal and at the Lahore University of Management Sciences. She served on the National Commission for Status of Women. She currently gives talks on the poetry of Faiz Ahmed Faiz at Faiz Ghar, Lahore.

Dreaming and Daring to do

By Haider Hussain

Mr Shaukat Ali teaches Chemistry to the students of F.Sc. Ruddy looking, always neatly but simply dressed. Students would know of his approach before he entered the class; the reason was the strong expensive cologne that he always wore. He had a dignified and imposing personality. He would start his lecture with some light-hearted comments, kept the classroom atmosphere rather pleasant and was a sociable person. Hospitality and a willingness to always be of service to others were his distinguishing qualities. At a subconscious level I am so impressed by him that my friends point out to me how I emulate some of his habits and it is true that in refinement and good conduct I do follow his example, and why ever not, his qualities merit such a response.

He laid great emphasis on presentation. After the lecture he would ask each student to step up to the front of the class and give a speech. This is called 'micro-teaching' in the field of education. In this the supervisor picks out fine points to correct each student. This improves our pronunciation and our command of the topic in question. He would give us a huge amount of homework and check it strictly, point out our mistakes and make us correct them. At the end of each month he would give us an assignment. Anyone who wouldn't do that assignment had to sit with Sir Shaukat and finish their work. I would often not do my assignment so I would get a chance to sit with him and exchange thoughts with him! This would help me resolve a lot of questions that had come up while studying.

Sir Shaukat encouraged us to think and reflect in a scientific manner. He would involve us in short, practical activities. First he would demonstrate himself and then he

would ask us to repeat the activity. He lived not far from the students' hostel so I would often go down to his place. I learnt how to use a computer from him. He showed me how to use the internet, how to create my own email account, how to search for a given topic using the internet. He always had good advice to give, whether I had a problem in my studies or in my everyday life. His advice always measured well on the scale of solving the problem.

I once had a dream in which I saw myself working on a project. The project involved using low cost material to cool a room. I was using an exhaust fan, a big pipe and a system for the flow of air. I dug a big ditch and poured water in it. I covered the top part and attached the exhaust fan to it, and next to the exhaust fan is the big pipe. Then I brought the other end of the pipe to the room, added ice to the water. When I switched on the exhaust fan, it captured the air and cool air started to enter the room. All this in a very vivid dream!

I shared this dream with my teacher. He said the whole concept was technically quite sound, but it has to be fine tuned further. He said to keep in mind the principles on which the process of evaporation is based, how the molecules that have more kinetic energy become vapour and exit from the surface of the water. I planned to work on the idea had seen in my dream, but this time in real life. However, our exams were drawing closer so I didn't get around to it. What was important was that my teacher took my dream seriously, breathed life into my imagination that was evident from the dream. He turned my dream into a practical thought. Now it is up to me to turn that practical thought into reality.

From Sir Shaukat's way of living and teaching I learnt one thing for sure: that I want to be a teacher and that I want to imbibe in myself all his good qualities. Good conduct, conversation, thought and reflection, propriety in walking, refinement in working, and performing each task with all my heart.

The author is a student of BEd at the Federal College of Education, Islamabad.

Its All About Self-Esteem

By Faiza Mir

I had once heard that confidence is given to us by others. We may climb the highest peaks, conquer forts or defeat the whole world, the person who teaches us to take pride in who we are is the teacher. This is the person who teaches us about self-esteem and shows us how to cope with rejection. That person, the teacher is never absent from our minds; the lessons that a teacher taught us always glimmer in the deep recesses of our hearts.

Being a good student I was cherished by my teachers. But I never thought that I would receive such love and attention from Ms. Riffat Sultana, the Head Mistress of our school, the Postal Colony Girls High School.

I was in class ninth then. There was to be a wedding in my family for which my family was going to leave town for tendays. I would also have had to take a few days off from school in order to go with them. When I presented my application to the class teacher she said, "Faiza, don't go because this year you are going to get the Best Student Award."

This was the first time that our school was going to have a prize distribution ceremony, and the first time that any student would get this award. On the one hand I was excited to know this but on the other hand I was also sad to know that I would not be able to stay back for the school function all alone, since all my family was going to be away. News of this issue reached the Head Mistress. I was called to the Head Mistress's office. The class teacher was also with me. Ms. Riffat heard

me out. There was only a clash of two days. Had I gone two days later, I would be able to attend the school function.

My surprise knew no bounds when Ms. Riffat very matter-of-factly picked up the phone and called up the Inspector of Schools Ms. Zakia Durrani. "One of our most brilliant students will not be able to attend this function. If it is not inconvenient for you, can we have this function two days earlier so that Faiza may attend? She is getting the Best Student Award and a few other awards too." When Ms Zakia agreed to the change in schedule, I thanked Ms. Riffat with mixed emotions of surprise and joy. Before I left the office, she said, "For me, each one of my teachers is important. For me each one of my future teachers is important."

Her prediction proved true. Today I am a teacher, with the confidence that she gave me. The feeling of being important that Ms Riffat Sultana gave to a ninth grader many years ago, is still with me. Today I am the torch-bearer for transferring this same love and sense of importance to each one of my students.

An Iranian saying puts it very aptly:

If you are you, then I am you too
If you are the respected you, I am
the respected you too

The author is a lecturer in the Department of International Relations, University of Baluchistan.

A Lesson in Lesson Planning & Reflective Teaching

By Dinar Shah

For a moment I was frightened to see a sharp deep cut on the forefinger of one of my grade 10 biology students. Zaeem got injured by the scalpel he was holding. I was worried about the cut; I was even more worried that the scalpel that might have been contaminated with chemicals during dissection procedures. I immediately let him go back to school to seek First Aid. I feared other students might also hurt themselves. I stopped the activity and brought the students back to their classes.

It was a pleasant day in spring. I took my students out of the classroom to a nearby forest patch for field teaching. The topic was 'Artificial Propagation of Plants'. I was supposed to teach this topic in winter but I postponed it till the spring season. Most of my students have agrarian family backgrounds therefore the field activity would be very relevant.

Out of the three artificial methods of plant propagation (grafting, layering and cutting), we chose to do tissue grafting first. After a brief theoretical discussion, I divided the whole class into groups of four, provided each group with materials including scalpels, adhesive tape, polythene plastic and thread and allowed them to go to the nearby green area. My students were enthusiastic. They disappeared among the trees. I first demonstrated the grafting method to my students and then, asked them to carry out the activities independently. After a couple of minutes Zaeem got a cut on his finger.

My first reaction was to blame the student. Then I realized that it was not the student but I who was responsible. A scalpel is not a good substitute for a razor for cutting the plant tissue. Its lower sharp surface curves upward. That makes it unsuitable for such an activity. It may easily slip over the branch and that is what happened with Zaeem. Had I properly selected the tool required for this activity, he would not have gone home with a bandaged finger that day.

For a long time, this incident flashed through my mind. I reflected over it. I realized that many times materials are not chosen appropriately for classroom activities. Proper lesson planning fosters students' learning. Perhaps many times I have gone to my class without proper lesson planning, causing long-lasting damage to my students. Each time there may not have been a visible cut, but there may be hidden bruises to a child's spirit of curiosity, unseen scars to his enthusiasm for learning, due to weak lesson planning.

We work with curious young minds and therefore, teaching is a trying profession. It requires passion and commitment. It is wrongly assumed that novice teachers need to plan lessons and not the experienced ones. Teaching is a complex process of both transfer and creation of knowledge, of skill acquisition and attitude formation. The teacher, new or experienced has to go in prepared. Was my lesson plan for grafting tissue appropriate for learning? The answer, unfortunately, is No.

I did not ignore the incident due to which the activity did not go well. I planned the same activity for next day again but differently. Firstly, I selected carefully the right materials replacing the scalpel with the grafting razor. Secondly, I took some first aid material (bandage and antiseptics etc) with me. This time it turned out to be a wonderful activity. Students enjoyed it. Two months later we visited the place again and saw that grafting tissue had become a part

of the plant and had started to burgeon. Thus my students had succeeded in grafting the tissue with their own hands!

My nine years of teaching tell me that students learn least from unplanned lessons. Effective lesson planning is a blend of theory and practice. It brings change in the form of students' deep engagement with learning. In the above event I tried to amalgamate theory and practice but I realized that in the end of the class I left my students with the theory only, due to the mishap. But the lesson I learnt from this event is worthwhile. Although we can not eliminate the element of human error from our lives altogether but we must try to reduce it by learning from the past, planning ahead and remaining optimistic for better ways always.

Dinar Shah is a Biology Lecturer at the Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Gilgit.

Let the Learning Remain

By *Sania Saeed*

I have been told to write about a teacher who left a lasting impression on me. How can I write about one; there were so many who chiseled me into who I am today, each one in her own way. What they all had in common was a respect for the student.

Mrs. Hayat was my teacher in class three. After Montessori, my interest in studying was waning. Until Mrs. Hayat came along. Her methods were just so apt. She had this unique ability to teach us language without us knowing what was happening. We never heard her correct us; we only remember the corrected version. The process of being corrected was so subtle that it left no mark, let alone a scar, on our curious little minds. Only the teaching remained, and there was no impact of the teacher herself.

In class three we were doing elocutions and readings in the library period. Mrs. Hayat never embarrassed us by catching us unaware and asking us to read. Never. That was never the point. True to her name, Mrs. Hayat imbued a new spirit and zeal in my love for learning.

Then there was Mrs. Lobo. Four feet tall, white short hair, wearing laced shoes and a sleeveless long dress. Just thinking of her at this moment fills me with pure joy, even after all these years. Even in my sleep I can see her fingers playing the piano. She was so full of energy, like a bundle of dynamite!

Mrs. Lobo would incorporate every child in the annual Christmas play. I wasn't a star (then!) but I tried to please her. She

challenged me in a constructive way. My repertoire of musical knowledge was more Urdu national songs and old filmi songs, so I struggled slightly with the English songs Mrs. Lobo would teach us. The music class was more than just singing songs; it was about the language, about keeping pace with each other, about adjusting to each others' weaknesses, about team effort. Mrs. Lobo kept an ear on each one of us forty children. She would correct one child's pronunciation, while singing, without missing a beat, or tell another child that she was out of tune. She was totally in control of her little team.

I wasn't particularly talented in singing but she encouraged me, told me to do it again and again, asked me to stay back and practice with her.

I remember my first performance in a school play. I was to play the role of an old woman, sitting and knitting and having muffins. In this play on the story of human life, each child played a different stage of life. In class two, my performance felt so important to me!

Mrs. Lobo was our teacher from class 1-7. I was in class eighth when I heard the news. I must have been so traumatized that I have no memory of it today. My mother tells me how I came home from school one day and just slept till the next morning. Even then I didn't want to go to school. My mother had to call up the school to find out what had happened. Mrs Lobo had had cancer. She had passed away. We had found out in school that day. School must have felt so meaningless to me. So meaningless, that my system completely collapsed under the weight of the loss.

But as often happens, life went on. While doing my M.Sc in Clinical Psychology I met Mrs Rubina Feroz at the Karachi University. Her gift to me was her patience in the face of all my, 'But Ma'am....' statements. She very expertly chiseled my attitude without thwarting my spirit of inquiry. She would invite me to carry on the

discussion with her after class. Mrs Rubina is a good friend today.

Writing this story I know one thing for sure: Teachers should be free-spirited and joyful. Only then can they make room in their teaching for the voices of children to be heard. Only then can they channel the flow of energy in their classrooms in multiple directions, not just from themselves to the students.

The author is a renowned television and stage actor.

Living History

By Ismat Riaz

Where do I start to tell my story? I have been a teacher for nearly 30 years. As a fresh graduate out of college, I was asked to join my alma mater as a teacher in their senior school. Everyday, I faced a class of nearly 45 students barely 4 to 6 years younger to me.

But, I had always been passionate about teaching and here I was enthusiastically being a teacher and becoming more and more committed to the profession. I discovered that I loved to talk and that dialogue with my students has continued in diverse ways and has never ceased. The respect and caring I gave in class has been reciprocated over and over again by my students, their parents and by society at large.

I taught English Language, History and later on, Pakistan Studies to my secondary school students. History is my favourite subject and I went to great lengths to make it interesting and informatively alive for students. I refused to be bound to the idea of giving notes and doing all the talking in class. It was always a challenge to find ways and means to make each lesson different and productive to fire the imagination of the young people who looked up to me for guidance and help. One day I would bring a big map of the world pre-1947 with no Pakistan on it.

Then, with a flourish I would ask them to close their eyes and voila, a map with the outline of Pakistan in all its green emerged on another world map. And, so would start our quest to find the causes, modalities and pioneers that went into the making of Pakistan.

But there is more to it than that. I believe that it is not scientists who will change the fate of our nation, but the historians, economists, philosophers, psychologists. In short, I believe in the humanities and social sciences as powerful funnels for making change enter into our society. The Pakistan Studies paper is not just an examination, an unnecessary add-on. It is an opportunity to engage children with their own past and heritage.

How did I make use of this opportunity? I contextualized the teaching of history with mention of current events. I used to bring in caricatures from current newspapers to class and use them as refreshers in the class and as starting points for discussion. I hadn't heard of the theory of multiple intelligences then, but I knew that some of my children would learn better if I offered them some visual impetus. And they did.

I still have drawers full of material that I have collected over the years for use in class: newspaper articles, old maps, audio tapes. One of my most prized possessions is a copy of the Times of England dating back to August 15th, 1947. The yellowing pages announce the birth of our nation, show the congratulatory messages of other heads of states on the creation of Pakistan. No amount of lecturing on 'value your country' can have the effect on a teenager that just holding this newspaper and reading it can. History is real. It is my job to make it alive for my students.

Our culture offers immense veneration to an ustad, a teacher. That veneration was lost with the acceptance of the 'Tuition culture.' Teachers started to treat learning of young minds as a 'business.' Students will and do need help outside the classroom; understanding that I have always welcomed my students to come over to my home and get the guidance that they need. Even today when I am not formally teaching at any institution, children come to me for help, siblings of ex-

students, others who have heard of me. The gift of knowledge is given to them for an exorbitant price at tuition centres: with me, they pay their dues by making a commitment to their own learning. Thus have I taught and this is what adds weight to my word and impact to my teaching.

That impact is re-enforced by small encounters with my ex-students. Sometime back, on my way out from a farewell dinner for an outgoing principal, a young lady accosted me as I walked to my car. It was an ex-student who greeted me and proudly told me that she was working for a newspaper. And, "Remember that passage from Thwastri," she continued, "that you made us do in class now I see the utility of it in my work as a journalist."

Today's fledgling media lacks the tool of an in-depth view of our condition as a nation because the roots go back to our history classrooms where our future journalists are not steeped properly in their own heritage and ideology, where they are not taught to critically engage with the information that is thrown at them. I was happy to hear that she was doing important work. I was also confident that she would be a journalist with some integrity.

Time and again it is just encouragement, a kind word and appreciation of students' work which has worked wonders. Teaching's best reward is when you can walk away satisfied with a job well done. And, that reward is intensified when you find a message on Facebook that says it all:

Dear Mrs Riaz
If that's you, just wanted to say hi. You were such a great teacher. CJM was cooler because of you. Please accept my regards.

Best
Nazia Hussain

I hope my ex-students will become leaders in a culture of innovation, creativity and meta-learning with the courage to initiate change for an equitable society in Pakistan.

The author is currently working on her PhD from England. She is a teacher trainer. She has authored History textbooks and contributes regularly to newspapers. She is involved with curriculum development for the Institute for Professional Learning, and active member of the Pakistan Coalition for Education and Alif Laila Book Bus Society

Minor Details, Major Impact

By Saadia Asher

I am a teacher,
Happy, friendly and kind,
Daughter of a teacher mother,
I can never leave the students
behind.

I stepped into the field of teaching thirteen years ago. I was confident that I had all the skills of a teacher as I was born in a family of teachers. My mother and aunts belong to the same profession and it helped me to learn informally from them. (or at least so I thought) I could hear their teacher- talk while discussing their schools, sharing how a new strategy they applied worked in their classroom. I also liked to play games like “Teacher Teacher” with my younger siblings and cousins. All these things were adding to my resource pool! This motivated me to adopt my family female profession. I thought I was all set for this.

I started as a pre-nursery teacher, with the little ones in my class. This was their first ever school and first experience of separation from parents especially their mummies. Along with taking care of their academic growth, I had to nurture their emotional needs too.

The settling down stage of the children went quite smoothly. Children started falling into the routine of the school. I was trying my best. I thought I was doing a good enough job, until...

Three months after the start of the new session, Aneela became unsettled and gradually stopped attending school. I tried to find out the reason from her mother but she did not give me a clear enough answer. “She starts crying as soon as she enters the school gate,” the mother said to me. Her

innocent cry used to upset me and make my heart pound. Aneela's weeping affected other children in class too, who would also become restless. I decided to call the parents again to discuss the issue. As soon as I started to speak, the father cut me short saying, “how can I send my child to a school where the teacher never smiles?”

His comment said everything to me. He pushed me in an abyss of self-doubt. I felt I had made a big mistake by entering into this profession. I thought that I was neglecting the needs of these little children entrusted to my care.

Aneela's father's comment helped me to change myself as a teacher. Today whatever success I have achieved as a teacher is due to that little girl who helped me to realize that the way I was teaching in the beginning was not right. From then onwards, I started teaching them in a Fun-to-Learn manner, smiling and laughing with the children, sharing jokes with them, allowing them to see me not just as their teacher but also as a motherly figure in the absence of their own mothers.

I had entered the profession thinking I knew enough to get by. I couldn't have been farther from the truth. It is the details that are hard to master and that make a world of difference. It is the missing smile that torments one child, and the harsh tone of voice that disturbs another. My story is for teachers and also for those budding teachers. The path is not as smooth as people think when they say, “If you don't have anything else to do, start teaching.” On the other hand, it is a wonderful and important profession.

In these thirteen years, I have tried to improve my teaching skills by learning from experience. All teachers need to step into the profession with an intention to learn throughout their career, as there is no one perfect method of teaching and there is always room for improvement in the scientific art of teaching.

The author is a primary school teacher in Karachi.

Mountain High Aspirations

By Lauren Allen

Just a short jaunt off the Karakorum Highway sits the Kaghan valley nestled among soaring mountains, lush green landscape, and the beauty of a small river that peacefully carves its way through the mountain peaks. Almost barely notable is a village called Kawai, a whistle-stop for any tourist venturing to bigger and better known destinations up in the northern mountains of Pakistan. For me this is where the journey ends. Each morning I enter the school with the red roof as a hundred and thirty children scale the mountains from every direction, hoping to arrive at school in time to say “good morning, Teacher” before the morning assembly.

Thirty two little bodies occupy my classroom each day. Sixty four eyes stare up at me as I give my lessons, the same eyes that not so long ago filled with tears at the anguish of losing loved ones, shelter, and livelihoods in the devastating earthquake of 2005. It is truly breathtaking, the paradox of the natural beauty against the devastation caused by a geologic movement beneath the earth's crust. Three hundred and twenty tiny fingers cling tightly to their pencils and paper, as if these meager school supplies are the only things that can sustain them in life.

Each day, I feel, we come closer and closer to the goal for these precious little souls- freedom through education. While they have a far way to go from grade 1, I can't help but think that these fundamentals will set the pace for the rest of their years as students. Letters, numbers, sharing, how to brush our teeth and wash our hands--these are the practices that I am privileged

to be able to share with all thirty two children as we learn together under the red roof. They relish every moment of attention given to them, the smallest encouragement translates into a fierce source of joy in their eyes. The small day to day victories spur me on in hopes that they will recognize the value that rests inside of them.

Finally, today, we had another victory in class 1B. It may be small by some standards, but I could not contain my excitement as I leapt up and down, clapping and yelling “good job”. Ranish wrote his name. Every other child can write their name, but Ranish has not even seemed able to recognize any letters yet. Today, with a little encouragement, but no help, he wrote his complete name.

It is not only that Ranish was able to write his complete name today, but the fact that I saw a confidence in him radiating in a way that was unseen in this student before. His eyes shown with excitement knowing that he had done something praiseworthy-that he is capable of conquering challenges (however small) that may lie is his path. My hope as an educator is to nurture and feed that spark, not only in Ranish, but into the very character of all thirty two children. My aspiration is that one day they will know their worth and be able to recognize the worth in others, having overcome the obstacles of growing up in a once-forgotten, earthquake devastated village called Kawai.

The author is an American who came to Paksitan in 2009 to volunteer as a primary school teacher at the Kaghan Memorial School, a project of the Kaghan Memorial Trust.

The author is currently a student of M.Ed at Punjab University Lahore.

My Favourite Teaching Theory on One Page

By Farah Yaqub Chaudhry

Madam Adeeba had done her Masters in English. She was my teacher in FA and BA. I had never before seen a teacher who taught like Madam Adeeba did. She opened up the class for discussion and taught us by debating ideas with us the way friends discuss and argue over matters with each other.

Apart from having a great teaching style, she also spoke in the most charming way. She spoke with perfect ease in a soft tone, regardless of whom she was talking to. Her focus was not only on the English curriculum but also on teaching us ethics and helping us develop holistically.

Though I was good in my studies, I wasn't quite able to express other talents that I may have had. I was too shy to take part in any extra-curricular activities. Madam Adeeba encouraged me to break out of my shell. Like many other students, my potential and my talents were nestled quietly somewhere in the deep recesses of my mind; because they could only ripen under the warm support of a teacher like her; my talents could only be nurtured by a teacher who was willing to share my joys and deprivation.

As a student of M.Ed I look back on Madam Adeeba's teaching practice and am awe-struck by how seamlessly she applied the theories of learning that I am now studying, to her teaching practice. This one page story is the sum of all teaching theory.

An All-Inclusive Oasis of Learning

By Mahenaz Amirali

My school is located in an urban slum of Karachi with people who do not have enough money to feed their family and that becomes their prime worry rather than children's education and well-being. Being an Early Childhood Education (Katchi) teacher, every year my class has a new batch of children ranging from 3-6 years and sometimes even older for whom it is the first-time in school. The school is a classic example of neglect, disinterest and poor planning that characterizes public sector schools. For instance, the ECE class is on the third floor, going up a dilapidated staircase.

Much like the proverbial velvet patch in a rag, my ECE class seems like an oasis in that school with children's faces glowing with excitement as they engage in classroom activities and games. For my relentless commitment, I am subjected to a lot of criticism and negativity from my peers and especially the school in-charge.

What keeps me enthusiastic about teaching for now seventeen years in an otherwise unsupportive and rough environment is the children. It is not their fault that they were born and are living in such dismal conditions; they deserve a chance to shine. I have learnt to value each child from the Early Childhood training programmes that I have attended. However, what cemented my resolve was a child named Farzana,

Farzana had a hearing and speaking disability. Her parents were neither aware nor interested in admitting her in a school for children with special needs.

Farzana was ten years old when she came to my class and thus was the oldest child in my class. She had never been to school nor was she taught at home. I did not know what to do with her. It was the first time that I had a deaf and mute child in my class. I didn't even know how to communicate with her let alone teach her. I went to my ECE trainers to seek guidance and was given a lot of reference materials and teaching tips. Using them, I learnt sign language to connect with Farzana, involved her in pre-writing and sight reading activities through which she started picking up the words and learning new things. Other children in the class never excluded Farzana nor did they call her names, mainly because they saw me, their teacher, respecting Farzana by involving Farzana in all these activities.

I felt I was the one transformed more than Farzana. I realized my ability to learn and adapt to children's learning styles and disabilities since then, I keenly observe my students to see if they have any learning disability for which they need additional support. Earlier on, I was completely unaware of this aspect of life. Farzana brought to me not only the consciousness but also the confidence in my own abilities as a teacher. I teach with commitment and a zest to improve myself; all this comes through children from the most marginalized background.

After a whole year of telling them and working with them, children start doing everything themselves. They start working together. They are not afraid to experiment, express themselves and to enjoy themselves. All this gives me the hope and the courage to continue my teaching in spite of all the negative factors in and outside the school.

The author is an ECE (Katchi class) teacher in GGP, Hashim Ghanchi School, Karachi.

elements together make up effective teaching.

The author is a teacher at the Idara Taleem o Aagahi Child Domestic Labour Center for non-formal learning, F-6/2, Islamabad

“Science, Anyone?”

By Sumera Safdar

This is the story of a group of ninth graders who were trying very hard to cope with science subjects. I had been warned by friends and family that science subjects are not easy. But I wanted to do my matric with physics, chemistry and biology.

That day we had a physics test. The whole class was ill-prepared. None of us had quite grasped the concepts. We were hoping for a miracle: may be the teacher will be absent, may be she will forget about the test? But none of this happened. The teacher came to class and she remembered that we had a test. But we still got our miracle.

After seeing our perplexed faces, Madam Shabana wanted to know what the problem was. Had we not prepared for the test? Were we confused? I was sitting in the front row, so she asked me where the problem was. I told her I was finding it difficult to understand the numerical.

She gave us a talk about how nothing is difficult, how you have to be able to face challenges etc. Then she explained the numerical using a completely different method this time, which we all understood. It was so useful that my friends and I decided to apply the same method to numericals in other subjects and help each other out if anyone got stuck.

This approach helped us immensely. I learnt that while people need to be encouraged, like Ms. Shabana encouraged us, they also need to be told exactly how to do things. Both these

Simple Abundance

By Kabira Latif

My teacher's name was Ms. Sohaila. She was thin and tall with dark curly hair and small bespectacled eyes. She must have been thirty years old when she taught us. She was always on the go, sometimes even barely aware of which way her dupatta was flying!

Our red brick school had fruit trees on one side__ guava, mango and orange. There was a big play ground where we all used to sit and bask in the sun in winter. We were surrounded by Nature's abundant gifts.

The school was simple, abundant and nurturing just like Ms. Sohaila was.

When I was in class sixth, I used to get confused between the words 'week' and 'weak'. Ms. Sohaila told me that since the word 'week' has dual power, the power of two 'e's, it cannot possibly be fragile, since it is strengthened by the double letters. That means 'week' is the set of seven days. And the word 'weak' is the opposite of strong because it only has a single 'a' and one lone 'e'. Since that day I have never had any trouble telling the two words apart.

Now as a preschool teacher, I use similar strategies to help my students learn spellings and vocabulary through association. The best tricks of the teaching trade are the ones that keep learning simple and accessible.

The author is a preschool teacher at the Sanjan Nagar Public Education Trust School

Sing a Song of Studying

By Tahseen Bashir

Six years old. Twinkling eyes. Tan complexion. Rehan was a class one student. He was always holding a set of two or three books in his hand, which he wouldn't even place on the desk! Teachers had a tough time keeping Rehan in class as he would always find ways to roam around the school, holding his set of books. Studying just had no appeal for this little boy.

One day I asked Rehan if he could sing. His shy smile was confession enough that the boy could sing a song or two. With some persuasion he agreed to entertain his class fellows with a song. He sang beautifully and the class cheered for him heartily.

Our school is almost in the lap of the lush green Margalla Hills. I tried to talk to Rehan about the mountains and the trees, all the lovely colours that we are surrounded by. Anything to get him to stay in class and to put his pen on paper. He started to speak to me about places he had visited etc.

In his notebook that day, Rehan wrote the letter A. He wasn't going to be won over easily!

His interest in schoolwork was slowly growing but every day he had the same request: He would first sing to the class and then do his work.

The author is a teacher at the Federal Government Junior Model School, F-6/3 Islamabad

The Awakening

By Muhammad Altaf Khan

“Sir! Sir! Ahsan used swear words with the teacher and she is crying! Three boys from class 4th rushed to the office to tell me this. One of them said, “Sir when you are not around, he uses bad words for you too.” Following my instruction, the boys went to call Ahsan to my office, the principal's office. The children left and I sat lost in thought: what could I do with this boy? Should I punish him...but this 'strategy' had been tried so often. When we called the parents to the school they were equally fed- up and would say, “Just do something, anything, to fix this animal.”

What can we do? There was just one solution: to get rid of this boy, to expel him from school. Before we did that it seemed appropriate to let his parents know and to talk with all the teachers. I had decided that no matter how much the parents begged and pleaded, Ahsan had to go, because if he didn't, I would. After all, using abusive language for a teacher was no small matter. And then Ahsan's entire record was overflowing with similar incidents showing a lack of control: he had bitten other children, caused them head injuries; he would injure children by pushing them or he would cut them with a razor blade.

All these things flashed across my mind, all of a sudden. Just then his class teacher entered my office, wiping her eyes. She told me that when Ahsan's class-fellows came to inform me, he had run out of class out of fear. Angry, I asked for his diary so I could send a note to his parents. I found out that he hadn't brought his diary to school that day. I asked for his rough copy and opened it to write a note telling his parents to come to school.

What happened after I opened the diary changed everything for me and for Ahsan. This one chance incident has changed the direction of Ahsan's life. I asked the teacher if this was truly Ahsan's hand writing. Yes it was, she told me. In the diary was written, “Everyone says bad things about me. Everyone hates me. Now even Mom has started to hate me. What should I do? There is only one solution left now, to end my life.”

Ahsan's words struck me like lightning. Where had he run off right now after hearing about my arrival? Had he gone to drown himself in the nearby canal? Was he actually going to take his life? Who will be responsible for his death? Who will answer for this loss of a human life? These questions created turmoil within my soul. I asked the children to look for him in school. I left the school on a motor bike to look for him. I found him and brought him back to school.

I realized that in my teaching practice, there was something very destructive. Although I continue to receive a lot of praise for what I do, I was not so sure that this praise was very well-deserved. It was for the first time that I had seen a child like Ahsan with tender care. This was for the first time that I had changed my attitude towards such a child. As I changed my attitude, in a few days time I had earned Ahsan's full confidence. He now trusted me well enough to know that his secrets were safe with me.

One day Ahsan told me, “ Sir when I swear at someone it's almost beyond my control; it's not that I enjoy doing it...just that at that moment I don't like you but later on I always feel ashamed ..”

With my new mode of thinking, I was now able to unearth valuable information about Ahsan that I hadn't been able to do in the last two years. Ahsan had a brother a year younger to him who was good in his studies and had a positive social attitude. Right from the start the younger brother

was appreciated while Ahsan had to face criticism. After careful deliberation and research I came to the conclusion that Ahsan was under severe mental and emotional distress due to this discriminatory behaviour. Seeking revenge from society by his deplorable behaviour was his subconscious reaction to such treatment.

After realizing this truth, I softened my approach towards all my students and not just Ahsan. I also made Ahsan's parents aware of the truth of the matter. Ahsan's social attitudes changed everyday; he was now viewed positively at home and at school.

Because of this incident, I saw many facts about teacher attitudes and child psychology; I decided then to start my own school which would be a center of learning to awaken this awareness. Today, by God's Grace, I am running my own school where children's mental and emotional needs are dealt with with sensitivity. There are various plans underway to do more in this regard.

I often think how each one of us teachers has an Ahsan in his class but do we ever take the trouble to read the writing on the pages of their diary or the script that runs in their tender minds?

The author is the principal of a private school by the name of Ideal Perfection School in Dera Mallah Singh, Sheikhpura.

The Exam Game and Other Thoughts

By Professor Dr. Iftikharuddin Khwaja

There are countless memories from my days as a student, many of them about some very special teachers.

In my treasure trove of memories from Karachi University is a photograph that some of us students had taken with the then Vice Chancellor, Dr. Ishtiaq Hussain Quraishi. The background of this photograph is that we were campaigning for our friend Yousuf Baluch before the university elections.

While running around and canvassing all of us friends decided to go get our heads shaven! We spared Yousuf since it was a matter of political decorum for him. One day all of us skin-heads, led by Yousuf, went to the VC's office to get a picture taken with him! After chatting with him for a while we requested him to please get a picture taken with us. Without any hesitation he quickly arranged for a few chairs to be placed right in front of his desk, merrily sat amidst us baldies and got the picture taken.

When I look at the royal treatment that the VCs of today are used to, I wonder if they would oblige students who make such a comical request. Our Dr Quraishi would often visit the library to sit and read there. Like everyone else entering the library, he would always get his bag thoroughly checked by the clerk at the entrance of the library on his way in and before he left the library. VCs today either don't enter a library, or if they do for the sake of appearances, they do it with a lot of pomp and show.

When I completed my doctorate from the University of Virginia, I returned to Pakistan and became a lecturer at the University of Baluchistan. My relationship with my students was like that of a Christian priest to the people who come for the confessional, and pour out all their thoughts and their wrong doings without any fear.

I was rather lenient with my students. My most painful experience as a teacher was when a student was failing in my subject. It would make me restless for days and days. However, the way students resorted to cheating during exams was equally disturbing. A student leader once came to visit me.

He had with him the question papers for the upcoming exams. Acting like the priest in the confessional and not like a policeman, I did not report on him. I recommended that since he had the question papers in his hands, he should learn the questions. But he wasn't even willing to do that. Cheating was the way to go for some of these students. 'It's not fun if you don't cheat,' he merrily told me.

In spite of all this, I appreciate that this boy did have some sense. He was once offered a teaching position at a university, an offer that he declined, saying, 'Teaching is for people with a strong moral character. People like myself should not become teachers.'

Once when my students sat for their final exam, I noticed some of them were teaching. Since that was the norm, I tried an innovative way to control it. I offered help to the students if they would not cheat from the books and papers they had with them. My rationale was that a teacher's job is to teach students, not to nab them when they are cheating. The university administration was obviously not very appreciative of my digression from standard teaching practices. In my defence I would say that I later saw how what I taught the students during that exam stayed with them for a long time after the exam. Secondly, I was

guiding them through hints and clues and was not handing out complete answers so they did get to use their own knowledge and skills.

In conclusion I would like to add that the purpose of exams is not to fail students but to enable them to play a positive role in society. Since this is a complex process, we have chosen the childish way of passing and failing students in exams. As a student of education it has been my observation that the exam papers that teachers set are seriously flawed and are at the mercy of the teacher's personal likes and dislikes. Serious training in setting an exam paper is the need of the hour.

The author is currently the VC of Iqra University, Quetta. He recently led a team to develop training manuals on curriculum development for teachers in higher education. He is a veteran educator with over thirty years of experience.

Teacher as Colleague

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A True Mentor

By Minhas Tejani

This is a story of a great teacher and a true mentor who has changed me particularly as a teacher and leader. I have been in the field of education for the last twenty years. Over this period of time I have seen myself evolve immensely in my professional life. As a novice teacher I had a lot of enthusiasm to teach and to make a difference. I tried out various strategies in the class but did not know the right pedagogy to teach the concepts.

There was always an urge to learn more by getting professional education.

My elder brother told me about Notre Dame Institute of Education (NDIE), Karachi. I went there to get the registration form. My first interaction with Sister Gabrielle Jennings, the first Director of the institute, was an inspiring one. She had a lot of humility. Yet, as a leader she was very assertive too.

I was very excited when I got selected for my B Ed course at NDIE. I was always trying to put in my best effort in all the activities. During the teaching practice I was sent to St. Michael's School. I was a bit nervous as I was teaching a senior class.

On the first day I had a science lesson in grade eighth. I didn't know that Sister Gabrielle would come for an observation. She came and sat in my class. While I saw her sitting at the back of the class I went blank and forgot my lesson. I somehow completed the lesson but I was not very happy with my performance.

Sister Gabrielle came to give feedback.

I knew I was in trouble. She discussed her feedback without anyone around which gave me a lot of confidence. She asked me a very simple question, 'What happened Minhas?' I was a bit reluctant to respond. She spoke, comforting and dignified, 'I guess it was because of my presence.... This is what happens with many students whom I observe. Being the Director of the Institute a lot of people needlessly fear me'. Her words gave me a sigh of relief. She continued to give me confidence. I successfully completed my teaching practice and was amongst the five most outstanding students of the class.

This may seem to be a very small incident but it has changed my life. If the situation had been mishandled, as is often the case, I would not have been the way I am now. One insensitive word at this point would have shattered my confidence forever.

Sister Gabrielle is no longer in this world but her contributions towards the betterment of education in Pakistan are enormous. Through NDIE a niche of true educational leaders has been developed in Pakistan. We aren't many but gradually we are bringing meaningful and sustainable change. We live in the hope that we too can bring big change in small ways, like Sister Gabrielle.

The author has been in the field of education for the last twenty years. Currently working as an independent educational consultant.

Excuses, Excuses, Excuses...

By Shahida Parveen

You may have heard of the recent trend in using Low Cost/No Cost (LCNC) materials to develop classroom activities. You probably think it is a great idea. It is. Except if you are in a remote area of Gilgit where you barely have access to even a box of tissue.

These were some of our concerns that we expressed to our trainer Alminah Pardan during a session on CE.ECED (Certificate in Education in Early Childhood Education Development). Our facilitator understood that what he may show would have more value than what he would tell.

He introduced us to Ms. Shumaila, a graduate of the CE.ECED Programme from last year. A tall soft-spoken girl, with a black scarf covering her head, Shumaila was a community teacher at a government school for girls in Gilgit. It is a rugged mountainous area. Understandably, the school is unable to provide any teaching learning material.

Alminah Pardan arranged for us to visit Ms. Shumaila's school. There we saw neat little subject corners, displaying relevant material made from locally available LCNC material. Ms. Shumaila spoke with us emphasizing the value of thinking outside the box and of improvising.

Talking with Ms. Shuamila quieted our doubts about using LCNC material in areas where empty packets from consumer goods and food items were not easily available. She showed us how we could make the best use of what was available to us.

When we went back to our own schools, we collected LCNC materials with the support of other teachers, parents, students and other stake holders. We found ways to incorporate this material in our learning and at the end of the summer vacation, our classrooms were ready for the new session; there were displays put up to support children in their learning.

What I learnt from Ms. Shumaila was that if we want to look for excuses to shirk work, there are plenty to be found; but if we want to be creative and productive, the resources are abundantly unlimited.

The author is a student of M.Ed at the Federal College of Education, Islamabad

On Becoming a Teacher Educator- Some Reflections

By Qamar Safdar

This is a narrative of my life as a teacher developing into a teacher educator. I hope to reflect on my past experiences in order to understand how they have shaped my present.

Today I am standing on the beach of my present life and gazing intently at the sea of past experiences. I am reflecting on my life as wave after wave of past incidents comes rolling back and the surf stings my eyes. Tears roll down my cheeks remembering past unhappy events and at times the sparkle of the waves leaves me smiling fondly at past happy events. Who am I? What do I believe in? Where do I fit in this vast expanse of the universe? What is my mission in life? How far have I achieved it? Why? Or why not? Have the waves of my life made any difference to the beach around me? The continuous rolling of the waves demand an answer and I hope by giving these answers, by reflecting on my life I can further improve my practice.

If I trace the critical incidents that stand out in my life I would like to share an incident from when I was in class seven. My classmate Nabiha got typhoid and was absent for nearly a month. We were preparing for our half yearly exams, which would begin in a fortnight. Nabiha got better and rejoined school. Crying, she told me that if no one helped her to catch up in her studies she would surely fail specially in history and geography which coincidentally were my favorite subjects. So I offered to help.

I remember explaining the lesson, "The Indus Valley Civilization". I vividly recall taking her through the lesson as if I was there, appreciating their excellent brick constructions, the public baths and the well laid out roads and drainages. Within a fortnight I coached her, half an hour in the morning and the same time in the afternoon until my bus arrived. When the results were announced she had passed and also secured the 'Best Effort' award. Her next statement changed my life. She said, 'Thanks Qamar. I could not have done it without you, you are a great teacher.'

I had not only helped a friend but also myself for I had found my vocation. It was then that I decided to become a teacher.

The next wave took me to my University where I had just completed my Masters in English Literature. I joined the college to teach English. The college was notorious for driving out lecturers especially lady lecturers. I faced the teasing of my life but I continued teaching in that College for a year. I resigned only when I was getting married and was shifting. I learnt to not only survive but managed to win my students' respect by reaching out to them and understanding their world. I did not realize then that these incidents were further chiseling me into a relational teacher. At the end of the year I had their respect and regard which improved their grades for they now wanted to study.

I asked the waves where do I stand today. Today I am an Assistant Professor teaching Educational Leadership and Management to adults not only in Sindh, Balochistan and the Northern Areas in Pakistan but also in East Africa, and Bangladesh. Experience has taught me that the best way to teach is relationally. From my friend in class seventh to M.Ed students, I have always cared. I am of the opinion that by studying ourselves, our stories and our relationships, we can develop purposeful curriculum and relationships to empower new teachers to

tap into their tacit knowledge and use it to design effective curriculum for their students. This kind of relationship is the cornerstone of relational teacher education.

My purpose in telling and retelling narratives of my experience in the context of teaching will help me to better understand myself as a teacher .and as a learner.

The author is an Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership and Management, associated with the Aga Khan University network, Karachi.

The Pleasures of Conversation

By Rehmatullah Khan Baloch

It was the month of June, 1995. All of us faculty members used to sit together in the department's tea room and chat over a cup of tea during recess. Mr. Noor was from our neighboring department. He also used to join us for tea occasionally. There were mixed reactions on Noor's presence among us, some were surprised, others felt he was an intruder from another department.

Noor was a student of a neighboring department who was probably introduced to us by someone from our department. That is why we all respected and initially encouraged him to join us for tea. Thus he became a regular at our daily tea-time.

Some of us were now starting to feel nervous by his constant presence among us. They felt he was there to listen to our conversation, our gossip. One of the colleagues said that Noor is always trying very hard to prove that he is very intelligent. Gradually, everyone had some objection or the other to his presence in our tea room. I said to my colleagues why can't we just enjoy Noor's company; and so what if he gets to hear some interesting good gossip or some useful ideas in our company? Why should that worry us?

One day Noor came to my office. He seemed eagerly in need of something.

"Sir, there is a welcome party in my department and I need a good script, a parody, poetry or something interesting that I can present on the occasion. Can you help me with that?"

I was glad that Noor came to me and that he felt I would be able to give him an

interesting script. Flattered, I promised to provide him the kind of script he was looking for.

The next day, he was again at my door for the promised script. I hadn't had time to write it yet. I asked him for a little more time.

In a flash of insight I realized that it was his search that brought Noor to our department. He was not looking for any secret information from us. His quest was for knowledge. He was a seeker of knowledge trying to find it wherever or however he may. At last I wrote him a thought provoking Urdu poem which he presented in the welcome party and received much appreciation from his teachers and classmates.

Soon after the welcome party Noor came to my office with a cheerful face to thank me for the poem. I too was happy to be of use to Noor, to the student of neighboring department.

It was a wonderful day of my life when it dawned on me that Noor was only hungering after knowledge and seeking the company of learned men.

At last the day came when he was leaving the university after obtaining the Master degree securing first division.

Today Noor is a responsible government official. He still drops in sometimes to sit and have tea with us.

With time my colleagues too accepted that there was no deep conspiracy in what Noor had been doing. He was, as they say, mingling the pleasure of conversation with the advantage of instruction.

The author is Chairperson, Department of Library & Information Science, University of Balochistan, Quetta.

Say Yes to Change

By *Sobia Iqbal*

There are lots of debates among educators. There are many theories of learning, many schools of thought. However, there is one thing that we all agree on: Teachers need training, right? Wrong. There are still some teachers who are strongly invested in opposing teacher training because they are opposed to change.

Our school in Gilgit had been selected for Whole School Improvement Programme (WSIP), an initiative of the Professional Development Centre, North (PDCN). For a year, we would have weekend workshops at the beautiful PDCN center, in the backdrop of beautiful mountains in Gilgit city. The lush green environment and neatly laid out orchards made everyone happy. Well, almost everyone.

There was a group among my colleagues who were against this training. This group was a huge challenge even for the school administration. The main force behind this group was Ms. R. She was traditional and authoritarian, happy in her teacher-centered classroom and in no hurry to switch to a child-centered approach to teaching. What did these trainers know anyway? She knew it all, she would say.

Around 50 years of age, Ms. R was tall. She wore loose long clothes with a white dupatta covering half of her face. She always carried with her an old-fashioned black leather bag with many small pockets. Her looking glasses were always with her, now on her nose, now in her hand. She seldom smiled. She was harsh and negative and thought this was being 'disciplined'.

She was not interested in innovations of any sort, least of all in innovations in teaching styles. She wasn't the only one. There were other nay-sayers too, who opposed the training, but Ms. R was their voice. And she was a loud voice at that!

The trainings began. Dr Molla Dad Shafa was the trainer. A truly gifted trainer. It now fell to his share to motivate this 'anti-group'. The first day everyone introduced themselves and took a round of the building; it was beautiful and equipped with the latest technology. Dr Molla Dad Shafa spoke in a way that was very impressive and that showed respect for everyone. He spoke softly, slightly bowing his head out of deference to the listener. Some of the ice had melted on the very first day.

The training programme was content-based, involving many hands-on activities. The facilitators welcomed the comments of all participants, no matter how negative or quarrelsome they were. The trainers always responded in a positive way. Their attitudes remained respectful and nurturing, which is the heart of all learning. They made the teachers in the 'anti-group' leaders of the groups, asked them to comment on the day's activities or to lead an activity themselves. At the end of the one year, they had changed the attitudes of the 'anti-group' in subtle ways.

In the last session, the teachers in the 'anti-group' were rushing to the meeting hall to take the seats in the first row and to reflect on the activities throughout the year. In the last session, there was no 'anti-group'.

The author is a student of M.Ed at the Federal College of Education, Islamabad

Simply Hard Working

By Khurshid Akhter Ansari

Ghayyur Hussain Sabzwari hailed from a remote part of Punjab. He came to Baluchistan for work. He found himself a job at the Islamia High School Library Quetta. He was very diligent but also very simple; that is why he only managed to find a junior position.

As I visited this library along with some colleagues, Sabzwari greatly impressed us. He shared with me his high aspirations that he was unable to realize as he was not qualified enough as yet. I advised him to sit for his BA exam from the Baluchistan University as a private candidate. His career would not progress much farther if he didn't even have a BA degree.

Eager and ambitious, he took my advice and passed the exam in the first attempt. Encouraged by his success, he wanted to study further ahead. The only problem was that he now had to study as a regular candidate and not a private one. How would he continue with his job if he became a regular student?

In those days the Department of Library and Information Sciences, University of Baluchistan used to run in the evenings too. This was an opportunity for Sabzwari to work and study. Not one to miss a good opportunity, he took admission in the Diploma in Library Science. He worked hard and would sometimes come to me for guidance. His course soon came to an end.

Now the FA pass Sabzwari, the high-school graduate, was a graduate and a diploma holder. He achieved all this while working. When the result was announced it

turned out that he had not only cleared his exam but had done so with distinction! How many a budding youth are there like Sabzwari, brimming with talent and committed to their own education, who miss the train just because no one ever pointed the way for them!

Sabzwari took the exam for the Punjab Public Service Commission and he got a 16 grade job.

Not one to be content with mere status, Sabzwari continued with his academic career. A few years later he also did his Masters in Library Science.

Why did I choose to tell this story? Who is the teacher in this narrative? I merely gave information to Sabzwari in a few casual conversations. Does that make me a teacher, or a vehicle of God's Grace whose purpose was to start Sabzwari on his road to success? Or is it Sabzwari who is the teacher? Simple and hard-working, never losing sight of his goal; what better lessons can one human being teach to another.

The author is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Library and Information Sciences, University of Baluchistan, Quetta

Super Teacher

By Anonymous

This story is about my colleague Ms Kausar. I was the principal of the Government Girls Higher Secondary School in Mohmand Agency when we first met.

When I joined this school as a principal I asked the Director for three months' time to clean up the school of all the trash and to raise the standard of education in the school. Within 6-8 months, my students had secured the top three positions in the matric exam. I never had a bossy attitude towards my team. If the grass needed cutting, I had no qualms about picking up the hoe and cutting it myself. This set a good example for everyone to follow. And of course I had the support of teachers like Ms. Kausar.

Ms. Kausar had done her Masters in Urdu. She taught Urdu to grades seventh through tenth. She had a heavy work load, yet her notebooks were always regularly and immaculately checked, a rare practice in most government schools.

Several faculty members came from Peshawar and Charsadda and would often miss the morning assembly, but never Ms. Kausar. Not only was she very punctual, but she also hardly ever took any days off. She only missed school if she had to visit Punjab.

Ms. Kausar was a powerhouse of unlimited energy. If we were notified of sudden visits from the Directorate, she would rise to the occasion and organize everything. She would do the compering on stage functions. On one such important visit when the Governor NWFP was the chief guest he specially appreciated her

spontaneous and simple style and wanted to know who her teachers had been.

Once such a visit was announced and the school had to be decorated to welcome the guest. Ms Kausar stitched colourful flags overnight to adorn the school.

Sometimes she would get tears in her eyes. This was when she felt unappreciated for all her effort. "No matter what I do, it will still be those teachers who flatter the seniors who will get ahead." She would say wiping her eyes. I would comfort her saying how God would reward her through her daughters. Sure enough, her daughter topped in the school in the grade seventh exam.

I would often ask her how she managed her work and her duty to her family and if she may be neglecting her daughters. She would say in a resigned manner, "After doing all this at school, I have little energy left. I want the reward from God."

This super teacher's attitude towards her students was very warm and accessible. Students would share their personal problems with her. If a student was straying off the right path, Ms. Kausar was the person who could handle it with love and firmness. Students who would not listen to anyone would listen to Ms. Kausar if she would stop talking to them out of hurt and anger. Only because the students loved her too.

Ms. Kausar and I are not colleagues any more but we are still good friends.

Yesterday Once More

By Jamil Najam

This story is from the decades of 50s and 60s about my teacher Abdullah Shakir. His memory fills me with a feeling of rigor, respect for human endeavour and to this day adds new vigour to my life.

He taught us Urdu literature in grade nine in a rural government school in Kasur where we learnt all the important lessons, lessons that were in and beyond the textbooks.

One day there was news in our school that the Inspector was due to come on his quarterly school visit. In those days school inspections were serious business and had a lot to do with academics and less with counting missing facilities, tables and chairs. In fact we all sat on the proverbial 'taats' (gunny bags).

The inspector arrived true to form carrying an impressive but typical leather bag, worn out due to its excessive worthwhile use and its bulges indicated that it housed within it half the office, documents stationery and all! Someone came to our classroom calling for Sir Shakir, who declined to leave his classroom. Not responding to an inspector's call was very daring indeed and confusing for the inspector.

A bit shocked the inspector decided to come to our class. He wanted to see himself who was this daring teacher Sir Abdullah Shakir, who had refused to rush out of class to meet him in the principal's office. The Inspector came to our door and watched what was happening in the classroom. A couplet from Mir Taqi Mir's poetry was written in the beautiful Nastaleeq script on the blackboard and

discussion was going on its interpretations when another student raised his hand and said, "Parallel to this verse that Ibraheem Zauq has said is the verse by Mir Taque Mirand what a verse that is!" The student wrote the verse he was referring to on the board and recited it too. Both the hand-writings on the board were equally beautiful, the teacher and the student making their mark side by side, none less than the other, each outdoing the other. The Inspector was awe-struck by everything he experienced in the classroom that afternoon.

On this discussion ensued until yet another student got up to share another piece of poetry. This quality and intensity of academic interaction completely shocked the inspector who then asked Mr. Shakir, 'Do you mind if I too can sit on the side and on the floor Sir? Sir Shakir said 'absolutely not, you are most welcome' and continued with the discussion. The inspector sat down observing the class completely awestruck until the very end. After our class concluded they (Sir Shakir & the Inspector) went towards the principal's office. We overheard the conversation.

Sir Abdullah told the Inspector, "These children come on their bicycles, some from a distance of ten miles, some on special trains..., I cannot bear to take the burden of wasting a single minute of their time. If I do, then I have to keep them back for extra time to make up for the lost time and they tend to miss their transport back home. That is why I could not interrupt my class. I hope you understand why I could not leave my class".

The inspector put his arms around Sir Shakir's shoulders, the image said it all, an inspector's complete happiness at a teacher's outstanding performance. That must have made his day... a difficult act to follow.

I often think of that day, of standards which were absolutely a cut above any prescription, professionalism and humanism with impeccable taste. I can still

feel the air of excellence in my classroom with Sir A. Shakir's brilliance and the inspector's expressions - humility and acknowledgment of a Great Master... These were our guiding lights, these were our teachers...

The author has worked extensively in the field of education. He is a retired Director Public Instruction, Department of Education, Punjab.

Teacher As Counselor

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Beyond the Wall of Anger...Bright Splashes of Colour

By *Fareeha Shahid*

As I walked into class eighth I saw a strange sight. All the girls stood surrounding one girl who seemed to be quarreling with all the others. Noticing my presence, all the girls found their way back to their seats, after greeting me.

This was my first day of teaching. I was fresh out of college after doing my BS B.Ed. I had merrily gone to school, clueless of what was going to happen in class eighth. The first two periods with classes ninth and tenth had gone smoothly.

I introduced myself to the class, but deliberately did not ask them to introduce themselves as they seemed a bit agitated then. Specially that one girl. I thought it better not to talk about the scene I had seen just now. I spoke to them generally about the power of unity and the value of co-existing peacefully. One of my students stood up and complained about Fauzia, 'But Miss, Fauzia is the one who is always fighting.' Fauzia, the girl who had been in the middle still sat clutching her seat, visibly angry as she mumbled something to herself under her breath. She was wearing a slightly dirty uniform. Her curly hair was disheveled.

I had to hear Faiza's side of the story too, so I asked her what the problem was. She moved her head sideways in exasperation and kept her silence. I asked her again. And yet again. Finally she burst out in a mixture of hurt and anger, 'I don't fight with them! They always fight with me.' Saying this she broke into hysterical sobs.

Just then the bell rang and I came out of the class, not very sure if there was anything else that I could do.

A few days later I was in class eighth again. I was their science teacher. I had asked my students to draw the water-cycle when Fauzia joyfully jumped up from her seat and offered to draw the water-cycle on the board. I asked her to please follow the instructions and draw it on the page that she had been given. She finished her drawing before everyone else, and proudly showed it to me. Fauzia was happy, relaxed and ready to listen at this point; I didn't want to miss the opportunity. I said to her, 'You are so cute Fauzia and you will look prettier if you comb your hair and wear a clean uniform.' She smiled and said, 'Okay Miss I will try to get ready for school properly.' I looked at her drawing which was truly a piece of art! I admired her drawing, showed it to the whole class and asked everyone to clap for her. All this pleased Fauzia and brought her guards down. Just a little bit.

I smelt the sweet faint smell of a small victory when Fauzia came to school the next morning wearing a clean uniform and with neatly tied hair.

But...

A few days later I came to school early and found Fauzia crying in an almost empty classroom. Some seats away sat another girl, also crying angry tears. There had been a fight. Fauzia had used abusive language. Again. I tried to help her understand the value of self-control, but Fauzia argued back. Soon she had left the classroom in defiant anger. My victory has been short-lived.

I was invigilating in class eighth as the first term exams began. Fauzia finished the three hour paper in thirty minutes. She then started doing what she loved doing the most: sketching. She had sketched a lovely scenery which I duly admired. I held it up for her class-fellows to see. Everyone clapped for Fauzia's wonderful drawing. The next day too Fauzia was done with her paper in

less than an hour. Then she called out to me. This had never happened before. Fauzia never spoke to any teacher herself, neither to ask a question, nor for any other purpose. I turned around and saw Fauzia's outstretched hand holding out a folded paper. 'I made this especially for you Miss. I hope you like it.'

I patted her on her face and thanked her for the Barbie drawing that she had made for me; how could a drawing of a Barbie mean so much to an adult, to a school teacher? It was more than a drawing. Each line, each curve reminded me of the patterns I was leaving on Fauzia's mind. Fauzia was slowly growing into a happier, kinder person than she had been on that first day in class eighth.

The result came out. Fauzia got the twenty second position in a class of thirty two.

I knew Fauzia could do better, and I told her so.

Fauzia then told me what her story was. Her parents had divorced. She now lived with her father and grandmother. Her grandmother taunted Fauzia and said hurtful things about her mother to Fauzia. She was too mentally disturbed to concentrate on her studies. I now understood where all her anger was coming from. She told me that she liked to paint and sketch; her mother was her inspiration for painting.

I got Fauzia a box of poster colours in the hope that if she is happy expressing some of her pain, she may be relaxed enough to focus on her studies. I asked her to please pay some attention to her studies. She made a promise that she would, but I wasn't so sure.

We were starting aerobics classes at the school. The other girls were excited to have this opportunity to exercise and have fun. Fauzia had first said that she wouldn't take this class. But then she came around.

She was now making an effort to be a part of other co-curricular activities too.

Fauzia's wall of anger was thawing. Her fights with her friends had almost come to a halt. Her behaviour with other teachers and her class-fellows was softer now.

As the second term exams drew closer, Fauzia started to approach me for help. She would often come to me in her free time to clarify her science concepts. She was an intelligent child. I only had to point the way for her and she grasped the concepts at the speed of lightning. It was all this energy and intelligence inside of her that was making her quarrelsome; now that her energies were channelized, Fauzia was a different person altogether.

Fauzia had kept her promise, the promise that she made to me on the day when I gave her a box of poster colours.

...In the second term exams Fauzia had secured the third position in her class of thirty two.

Fauzia had found the colours that she was looking for to brighten up her world. She had broken out of her wall of anger.

The author is a science teacher at the Sanjan Nagar Public Education Trust School, Lahore

Bipolar Disorder, Bilateral Teaching

By Shabana Tarar

This is the story of my teacher who saved the life of her student who had once tried to commit suicide and may have made a second attempt. Ms Kashf Taj taught us in F.Sc. She had a deep interest in the overall well-being of her students. In this age of materialism she offered us free coaching classes. After patiently hearing out our problems, she used to give us sincere advice. Naturally, we became emotionally attached to her and would share our personal problems with her.

One of our class fellows Shazina got a lot of attention from Ms Kashf, as she often seemed disturbed and was lagging behind in studies too. At times Shazina appeared very energetic and enthusiastic about life and at other times she was depressed and lethargic.

We didn't know then that she had bipolar disorder. It is a psychological ailment in which the patient passes alternately from a phase of high energy followed by a phase of extreme depression. The depression phase is marked by low energy, non-social behaviour, unexplained feelings of exhaustion and lack of self-esteem, sadness, weeping and suicidal thoughts. The exact reason of the disease is unknown. A lot of times it is due to genetic inheritance. There is treatment available for it, through counseling and medication.

Ms. Kashf had been observing Shazina. She developed a rapport with her. After FSc Shazina had to seek admission in another college. She was denied admission in our college due to her psychological disorder. This was very disturbing for her,

so much so that she tried to commit suicide. Her family found out and rescued her, but they were not sending her for psychotherapy or counseling.

All through this difficult phase of Shazina's life, Ms Kashf maintained contact with her and continued to comfort her. Ms. Kashf spoke to Shazina and convinced her to tell her parents to take her to a psychiatrist. Initially Shazina resisted the idea as she didn't want to be labeled 'a mad person' by her family and by society. With Ms. Kashf's constant persuasion she finally agreed to speak to her parents.

As Shazina had anticipated, her parent flared up. They said Shazina was crazy to suggest such a thing and that her teacher Ms. Kashf was a fool; how could they take Shazina to a psychiatrist? How would they find a suitable match for her if people got to know that she was crazy?

Ms Kashf tolerated their anger, understanding that they knew no better and that their concerns were very real in a society where it is considered better to live like a mad man, then to get treatment for being mentally ill. She continued to speak with them at regular intervals. Finally they gave in and agreed to take Shazina to a psychiatrist.

After a year long treatment, she had successfully overcome her depressive states. She graduated from college and then did her MSc. She started to work at a university of international repute. A life had been saved and made purposeful by Ms. Kashf's persistent intervention.

Ms Kashf moved to university teaching. She is currently doing her PHD in UK.

This is one among many episodes depicting Ms Kashf's passionate and continuing involvement with her students.

The author is currently a lecturer at the Lahore College for Women University, Lahore

He Finally Became a Realist

By M.Sami Mufti

When I said to him, 'Son tell me about the problem that you are facing. I have heard that when you are outside your home you are a happy-go-lucky youth, full of life, a teenager with hopes and desires but as soon as you enter the house it seems as if you are in great discomfort. What is it that has control over your mind?' Perhaps stifling his anger and hissing, he spoke, 'I wish I could emit fire from my nose and mouth, like dragon.' He had stepped out of the house after being scolded by his mother for being careless about his studies. I had spoken to this boy before but this day I realized that the boy that I thought to be a mere child was now actually a young man. He had entered the period of puberty. The physical and emotional changes that take place during the teenage years, along with societal chaos had occupied his mind like a big junkyard. He had to really watch what he says, lest his parents get wind of the changes taking place in him.

Hearing this teenager's comments reminded me of my own teen years. I realized that this is the time when a child needs the most guidance. Seeing how sensitive the whole matter was, I resolved to make things better. Who could be worse than a teacher

Who is presented with such a perfect opportunity to train a child and still doesn't avail it? Then I spent some time with this teenager. We had several proper sessions. I also met him outside the college, in the school library, took him out to the park, or shopping. Through all of these excursions I kept trying to explain to him that the only way to solve these problems is

through dialogue. After several conversations he finally started to open up. After several sessions he finally started to tell me about himself in some detail.

To summarize what he said to me, he was fed up of his mother's (in his opinion) unnecessary strictness. He shared all his problems with a girl. He could not determine the exact nature of his relationship with this girl; he wasn't sure if this was just a Platonic friendship or if this friendship was the harbinger of a tale of love. Seeing his friends do so, he too wanted to start smoking. He liked the idea of smoking with his friends, only for the sake of 'style'. Because both his parents are religious, god-fearing people, he feels immense moral pressure on himself. He wants to be left free and that no one should ask him what he is doing, where he is coming from or where he is going. His academic performance had been slipping down further and further, for the last three years or so, but he was not bothered about it; he didn't like to be made to reflect on the consequences of his actions.

When I gave some thought to his father I felt that he was like that merchant who had no clue that his merchandise he had purchased was melting away like ice. If he doesn't take good care of his stuff, then one day the merchant will lose his principal investment too. Children are to provide support to their parents in the future. Parents invest in their children and hope that in the future the children won't abandon them in their old age.

When I spoke to his mother I told her about the responsibilities of a parent. I told her how delicate these flowers, these children are and how easily they can wilt due to the negligence of the gardener. She was aware of the seriousness of the whole issue, but being an emotional mother, she wasn't quite aware of the solution.

I continued to meet with this teenager, encouraged him to express himself, gave him the confidence that what

he said was safe with me, so he could tell me anything and everything that came to his mind, good or bad, moral or immoral. I laid great stress on having confidence in one's own self. I assured him that all the problems that seemed so colossal to him today, would seem insignificant in the years to come. I told him that all he had to do now was to express whatever thoughts he had, and that time was not an issue, I would be there for him whenever he needed me.

I helped him view his relationship with the girl in a normal light. I told him there was nothing wrong with being a friend to her, nothing that he had to be ashamed of or be secretive about. I told him that he had to keep it a secret only because the society we live in takes a negative view of such things. There is a big difference between something being disliked according to the values of one society, and it being a crime. I explained to him that just like he had friends in primary school with whom he had now lost contact, then in middle school he made friends, some of whom he left and some had left him by now, in the same way this girl was also one such friend in his life with whom he should not make any life long commitments, nor should you declare that he will be friends with her for the rest of his life. Just like when your friends separated from you, you didn't think they had cheated you or been disloyal to you, in the same way if she leaves you, you should not think of her as insincere and likewise, help her understand that if you part ways with her she shouldn't think that you were cheating her.

When that boy saw that I gave importance to who he was, that I acknowledge his personality, he started to pay heed to what I said. Thus I continued to descend deeper into his being and his awareness continued to grow. Then he went and told his friend about these facts of life too. One evening he told me that he had finally been able to make the girl understand and now she doesn't label his change of attitude as disloyalty.

The next step was to encourage the teen to focus on his studies. Being naturally intelligent, he did quite well in his Cambridge (A Level) exams.

As the choices he was making in life had changed, his relationship with his parents improved too.

Today he is a young man, full of aspirations yet seeing the world in the light of reality.

The author is associated with the Musab School System, Johar Town, Lahore

My Good Hearts

By Mrs. Kaneez-E-Sayyeda Murtuza

It was my first year in the Model School and I had been made the class teacher of the rowdiest section of class ninth. When I reflected on the class behaviour I realized that it was because I had a collection of bright and witty students who had always been labeled as the good-for-nothing brats. My life was very eventful that term because my children were sure to do something new everyday to keep me occupied! I really had to use all my imagination to win their trust and to keep them from mischief along with cajoling them to study. They were full of energy and it was running in all directions.

Amongst these naughty and restless ones there was a very shy and quiet student, Hareem. She was very attentive in the class and would answer when asked but never volunteered to participate in class discussions. Though everyday I had to deal with something or the other, I had no idea that the biggest event that session would be related to Hareem.

Hareem was never absent from school, so one day when she didn't turn up I was a bit disturbed. However, thinking that maybe she had high fever or something else I continued with my routine. When my period ended, I went to the staff room and the commotion there was surprising. I was told that Hareem's elder brother Nasir an O' Level student of our school- had died after falling from the terrace. This was very shocking for all of us. Senior teachers went to Nasir's house for condolence but the news that they came back with was even more alarming. It was being said that the child had taken his own life and that his death was not an accident. All kinds of rumours circulated.

In the evening I went to Hareem's house for condolence. The child was in such a miserable state that she just sat with her head bowed down. When a class fellow told her that I had come she just put her head on my shoulder. It was very difficult for me to say anything and the only thing I could think of was to tell her that she was not alone and we all were with her in this challenge of losing a beloved and bearing all the rumours and malice.

Two days later Hareem's best friend Sabeen stood up in the class and said that Hareem had asked her to convey a question to me. The question was "How will I be able to join the school again, with everyone asking me about my brother's death?" I looked at the class and said to them that this was a question for all of us. I asked them if we were courageous and sensitive enough to take care of Hareem when she came back. The whole class said that they would do everything to support her and after a five minute discussion it was decided that all of us would behave normally, nobody sympathizing with her. We also decided that without being noticed all students will keep an eye on Hareem and would handle the situation if anyone from any other class would approach her. Students asked me what if some teacher asked her any such thing and I told them that they would not. I then told Sabeen, Hareem's friend, to call her up and ask her to join the school without any fear.

The next step was to talk about this issue in the staff room and politely say to all my colleagues that any reference to her brother would make Hareem uncomfortable and that we should all respect her privacy and not feel sorry for her or continue to sympathize with her in ways that are not comfortable for her.

Hareem joined school the next day and I could read the fear in her eyes. I told her to complete her pending work in three days' time and then submit her assignments (this being the routine for any

child who has been absent for three to four days).

Recess came and I substituted my break duty with the teacher on duty that day. With my support students did not let any one approach Hareem. She remained unaware of our activities. The message was soon conveyed across the school that no one was allowed to invade any one's privacy.

It filled my heart with pride when I saw that it took only three days for Hareem to be back to her normal self. The unity and team spirit of the class had rejuvenated her. She laughed and smiled with her friends and resumed her life as it had been before the unfortunate event. Hareem is now in a medical college.

The author is a teacher at Fatimiyah Girls School, Fatimiyah Education Network, Karachi

Of Food, Family and a Few Timely Words

By *Misbah Rasheed*

Rafia is my student. She is quiet and fragile-looking. She is one of those intelligent students who don't pay much heed to their studies. I often tried to find out the reason for her meekness. Even in class she had a lost look in her eye. She was reluctant to let me in on her worries.

One day things got worse when her friends told me she hadn't been eating for the last several days and was refusing to tell anyone the reason for her desire to waste herself away like this. I was extremely disturbed by this young adolescent's complete despair and her desire to end her own life. I tried to convince her to unburden her anxieties with me. I spoke with her at length after class, away from the intrusive gaze of her class-fellows. After a lot of effort Rafia finally agreed to talk.

Rafia's parents had chosen an illiterate boy to be her husband and wanted to marry her off at this young age. There was a lot of pressure on her to agree. Her family was constantly taunting her about her studies, saying that she wouldn't be able to make anything of her life with all this education.

After an hour of counseling Rafia understood that a hunger strike or ending one's life was not the solution to her problem; that in fact education teaches us to face our problems with courage. On the other hand, I called her mother and spoke with her about the issue. 'All this pressure will cost Rafia her self-confidence,' I told her mother, 'And she won't be able to realize her potential nor nurture her talents

if you marry her off now and tie her to household responsibilities for the rest of her life. Let her study and make a name for herself and for you.' The mother saw the sense in what I was saying. The power of truth made her change her mind and convince the other family members to let Rafia study for now.

After that day I saw a huge transformation in that child. She was now more attentive to her studies. Her grades this term were better than they were last term.

One small bit of my timely attention made such a huge difference to one human life, the life of my student.

The Art of Public Speaking

By Aasma Shahzadi

I had a long history of deprivation both at school and at home when I met Sir. My parents divorced when I was three years old. My mother took me and my little brother and moved back to her parents' house. My mother's brothers and their wives were kind to us, but there were still unpleasant times and hurtful things said to us. Our mother showed patience in the face of it all and so did we.

My mother was illiterate but she still sent me to school, or perhaps that was why she sent me to school.

I was basically a shy child. Then I found teachers who were harsh if a child made a mistake. The combined result of all this was that I started to hate school. Each time I spoke to any teacher I could feel my heart beat, I would be so nervous. The less I spoke the more they thought I was a below average student and the more they would yell at me, and I would keep getting quieter and quieter. The vicious circle continued until...

Sir Abrar was my teacher in FA. He too noticed that I was very silent in class. He started to pay me extra attention and would not miss the slightest opportunity to appreciate anything positive that I had done. This was all new to me. No one had treated me like this ever before. He even appreciated my silence, where everyone else had chided me for it. He would say that silent people are very wise, and there are so many things you can do. Some might say that feeling happy at such remarks was a bit childish for a student of FA; I am sure many

teachers think that. I know that praise has worked wonders for me, no matter what age I was and I think this is true for other people too.

I had waited twelve years for a teacher like Sir Abrar. I who was unable to have a normal conversation with any one was now participating in speeches and competitions, all because of his genuine appreciation.

A special incident that I have even noted down in my diary is how Sir Abrar encouraged me to go on stage for the first time. He wanted me to be the compere for a college event. My first reaction had predictably been, "Who me? On stage?" But it was also like a dream come true, like living a fantasy. I had never thought that I would be the focus of attention like this, on stage. I learnt my lines well and got a lot of praise from everyone for my performance. This gave me the confidence to participate in other activities too.

Today I am a doctor. But I had made up my mind after meeting Sir Abrar that whatever else I did, I would always be a teacher, the kind of a teacher he was. I teach in the morning and go to my clinic in the evening. For me it is important that all my students are able to speak in public, to express themselves with ease and I invest a lot of time teaching them these skills like someone had taught me to speak and to stop being afraid of the sound of my own voice.

The author is a teacher at Ideal Perfection School, Kot Sohnda Village, Sheikhpura.

The Family Feud

By Tehniat Farrah

Naushaba was a three year old at the Model Child Welfare Centre where I have been working for the last 18 years. When I observed her for a few days, I noticed that she did not mingle with the other children and seemed a little frightened.

It is a routine practice at our school to call parents if we have any concerns about a child. Following that procedure, Naushaba's mother was asked to come several times. The first two three meetings were not really productive. The mother would come, hear what we had to say and go back. We weren't getting much information from her. She was an educated lady and was herself a teacher at a school.

Then one day she told us the real story. She had separated from Naushaba's father. The husband and wife had had issues since even before the little girl was born. Now they had separated due to their differences.

Meetings over Naushaba's aloofness in class continued for about a year. The mother was repeatedly told to create an atmosphere at home that would be conducive to her healthy growth and that would mould her into a stable person. We made her realize that the presence of both the parents is essential for the healthy growth of a child. After a year of these meetings, she finally agreed to negotiate a reconciliation with her husband. After a gap of several years, the husband and wife reunited.

I noticed a distinct improvement in Naushaba's behaviour. She smiled

more, and was happy to interact with other children a little more than she did before.

Naushaba stayed with us two years and we were happy to see how her personality and her performance both benefited after her parents resolved their conflicts.

Was it our job to convince Naushaba's mother to work on her relationship with her husband? Was it our duty? Did we have any right to interfere with her personal life? These are all good questions. The answer to all of them is that when a child walks into my classroom, I have the right and the duty to act in the best interest of that child. That is the most important thing for me.

The author is a teacher at the Women Welfare and Development Center, Islamabad.

The Late-Comer

By *Munawwarah Rehman*

It was the month of March some years ago. I was on the interview panel to interview applicants for admission to the university. A tall and well built youth entered the room. From his appearance he seemed to be a cultured boy. This was Behram. He was wearing a white starched shalwar suit. As soon as he entered he sat down on the seat, reclining at ease. We found this a little strange. He also did not have his documents with him. Anyway, we took a brief interview and got his documents the next day. To cut a long story short, he got admission in the university.

Classes began. I used to have my class in the morning. Behram would enter the class when the period was almost over. He had neither books nor stationery with him. This went on for about three weeks. I never reprimanded him for coming late, nor for leaving his books at home.

One day I sent for him in my office. He walked in looking somewhat embarrassed and hesitant. I motioned to him to sit down. After a pause I asked him, "So! How are your studies going? Are you following everything we are doing in class?"

"Madam I come late in the morning so I don't know which topic we are doing."

I ignored his confession and continued to say, "Listen Behram, you are a responsible boy and I need your help in managing the class. I would appreciate it if you could make sure that there are no outsiders sitting in our class and that the chairs and everything else is in order. You don't have to do anything yourself, you will have the peon to help you move things around."

Hearing me give him all these instructions, Behram looked a little surprised. I don't know what he had expected me to say when I called him to my office, but it was certainly not this! But he stood politely with his hands folded and promised to do as told.

And he kept his promise.

Behram is now a senior official at the Secretariat. When I meet him he still remembers this incident and how his whole attitude changed for the better, how being made in-charge of the class turned him from an irresponsible student to a responsible officer.

The author is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English, University of Baluchistan, Quetta.

The Morning Greeting

By Farkhanda Auranzeb

All the teachers in the department hated him. No one could stand his presence there. He didn't even greet anyone. His class-fellows feared him because he would bully everyone; the girls were specially the victims of his unpleasant habits which was what upset the teachers the most. All of us teachers wanted to provide a safe environment to the girls under our care. He had strong links with the student unions so we had to tread cautiously, fearing a reaction from the unions that would disrupt university activities. He would pretend to sleep in class and make loud snoring sounds; he would sprawl himself on his seat in the most inappropriate manner.

A month passed by. The Head of the Department called a meeting especially on this issue. It was decided almost unanimously that this boy should be expelled from the university under Disciplinary Action. Mine was the only dissenting voice. I requested that this decision be delayed for some time; I wanted to try to reform Akbar instead of sending him out as a menace to society. Reluctantly, my colleagues agreed to give it some time.

I started to warmly greet Akbar, something which no other teacher did. His response? He would respond with a loud and rude salaam. I would remain calm. Slowly his salaam tuned down to a normal one. I invited him to come over to my office if he ever had a problem. He would sometimes come for a chat. All this was not going unnoticed by my colleagues, most of whom did not approve of my welcoming attitude towards Akbar.

Akbar was from an affluent family. The parents had separated, leaving him at the mercy of his extended family. He often had to hear taunts about how his mother had left him as a burden on others. And as for studies, he really didn't care. It was the girl whom he wanted to marry who had set this condition: she would only marry him if he had a Masters degree. But he was not going to actually study while he was in college, he told me. He could get his degree by cheating on the exams too. What gave me hope in Akbar was the knowledge that the hard shell that he had built around him was just a pretense, a defence that a lost little boy had erected around himself.

The snoring in class had stopped. He wasn't behaving as badly as he once used to. He had started to greet his other teachers too. I would repeat lectures in Urdu so that he would understand and remain interested in what was being said.

He told me one day that he had changed himself for me. That he saw his mother in me.

Things continued to improve. Akbar actually apologized, though informally, to his class-fellows once when they had gone on a picnic. After that the ice melted with his class-fellows and they too gave him a second chance. Before that, if he would walk up to a group of friends and try to join them, they would all go their separate ways. But not any more.

These milestones were reached in a period of seven months.

One day he entered my office with a pile of books and said in his typical humorous manner, "Madam, the donkey has brought his load to you, now it is up to you to make these books a donkey's load or a human being's knowledge!"

I tried hard. I translated other teachers' lectures for him too. I helped him solve exam papers. Taking my advice, he joined a language center. His routine was

now more focused around his studies. The girl he loved was also happy to see this change, and this encouraged him further!

Akbar completed his Masters in English Literature. Soon after he got engaged. I was a special guest at the engagement. Akbar is now the proud father of 4 children and is working in the police department. The boy who had once seemed to be a threat to his class-fellows' safety had now evolved into a defender of the law. By my consistent morning greeting to him.

The author is a Professor at the English Department, University of Baluchistan.

The Unread Eyes

By *Mir Sadaat*

The first day as I entered class I encountered a fleet of gazing eyes. Each set of eyes had its own story to tell and they all wanted to be heard, explored and seen. My eyes just stopped on a set of eyes that had none of the characteristics that the rest of the class did. Those two eyes were shallow yet so deep, they were clam yet a tempest could be seen in them and the smile which she was wearing was so mellow yet refreshing.

Instead of going by the traditional introduction of the group I was prompted by those eyes to ask a question "What is Life?" Each student gave their definition of life; I was still waiting for the response of those unread eyes. When her turn came she very politely said salam to me and said calmly, 'Life is a battle which we all lose in the end but are always hopeful that we may win.'

Afterwards I gave them an introduction to the course but I was still thinking about the reason for the emptiness of those eyes.

It was four weeks after the first class that she again spoke in class but her eyes were always very communicative, they were always scanning for pain in others. Then finally the day came when the mystery of those eyes was revealed to me:

Me: Why do you take life this way?

Safia: Because that is how life is,
Sir!

Me: Would you like to share with me what has made you feel this way?

Safia: Sir my mother (with eyes full of tears) always hoped that her life would get better and one day she died in the

trance of that hope.

Me: But death is not something which we can deny, then why blame life?

Safia: Because my father now hates himself for not treating my mother respectfully in her life and throws his all emotional problems on me and my younger sisters.

Me: What about your brothers?

Safia: We don't have a brother.

Me: It means you have a greater responsibility towards your father and your family.

Safia: My father doesn't think I am worth anything.

Me: So, how can you prove him wrong?

Safia: Sir! I have no idea and I am here to get my project topic not to engage in this nuisance of proving my father wrong.

Me: Oh right, your topic. Well your topic for the project is "How to make females an integral part of our society".

Safia: Sir! But this isn't a management topic.

Me: It is my child. You will understand it by the time you will finish it.

Safia: It's impossible for me to do it Sir!

Me: The word impossible itself says, I-M-POSSIBLE. And remember one thing: Always believe in yourself because you are a creation of Allah. Underestimating yourself means you doubt the Power of Allah.

By the end of the semester one day a grim old man entered my office and said to me that he wanted to thank me for changing his life. Surprised I asked, "How?!"

He replied with a smile by changing my Safia.

The author is a lecturer at a University in Quetta

The World of the Naughtiest Boy in Class

By Afshan Huma

It was the first day of my first job as a teacher. I was appointed as a Mathematics teacher in a renowned school of Rawalpindi. The fourth graders who now sat facing me had been shifted here from another branch of the school and all the sections had been shuffled. I decided to begin by selecting a class representative. I asked the children to volunteer for the post. A few of them raised their hands. One of these was a child who had bright black eyes and a smile on his face. This was Omer. Something made me ask him to take the charge for the time being until a proper class prefect election. The other children seemed to find it difficult to accept my decision. One of them came up to me with the utmost concern, 'Ma'am please do not give him the responsibility as he is the naughtiest boy and he always fails two-three subjects in exams.' I was so upset to know this. I believed that he was a bright child who had not been guided well. From this point onward I decided to make guidance and counseling a part of my teaching.

I had done my Masters in Psychology so I took permission from my head-teacher and had a meeting with all the subject teachers to specifically discuss the case of Omer. We went through his reports and learnt that he had been failing in two three subjects regularly for the last one year and was promoted conditionally to this grade.

Then I called the parents. I came to know that Omer was living with his uncle.

His mother had died and his father had re-married. He did not have a good relationship with his step mother so he was sent to live with his uncle. Omer's profile was becoming clearer. How important it is to look at the complete picture of our students' lives!

I personally arranged one-to-one meetings with Omer within school hours with the permission of his family and my school-head. I convinced him that he needed to study well and showed him how to gradually improve his grades in his weak subjects. I provided him support during break time and games period if he needed any help.

A crucial issue was the attitude of other subject teachers. They were not convinced that Omer deserved to be treated with love and care. Two of my colleagues even told me in strong words that I was interfering with their work and I should not be telling them how to treat the child. In a way they were right as I did not have the designation of a student counselor. After a struggle of one term when the exams were held Omer had passed in all but one subject. He did not achieve very high grades in any of the subjects but had 50% marks in most areas. I again had a one-to-one meeting with Omer. I asked about the particular subject that he did not pass. He clearly identified the problem: the teacher was too strict with him. She snubbed him whenever he asked a question or told him to leave the classroom. I had no choice but to report this to the school-head.

The head-teacher took a very positive initiative. She personally requested all subject teachers to treat Omer as a special case and not to be very strict with him. Since it was an order of the school-head, everyone had to follow. I was given the responsibility to communicate regularly with Omer and his family. At the end of the year Omer passed all the subjects obtaining more than 50% marks. More importantly, he showed real improvement in

his everyday behaviour as well. The child as well as his family were very happy at the annual day when he received his result card with good remarks from the teachers and the head-teacher as well.

This incident strengthened my belief that being a teacher we must know that our first responsibility is to strengthen a child's personality. Guidance and counseling should be an in-built aspect of teaching. I know I definitely try to make it a part of my teaching.

The author is a lecturer in the Education Planning and Management Department, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad

Through the Eyes of a Teacher

By Salma Laleka

For years I watched a mystery unfold Growing from innocence A child like any other In a cluster of boys soft and bold Standing out in a space of its own A promise in his quiet ways But struggling to maintain a hold On the tasks getting out of hand For he felt alone and deprived But never to anyone was this secret told Taking their toll on innocence unguarded Points in time sneaked by Twisted and thorny they crushed every desire And soon he was lost to the wile and hoax of the world of drugs and smoke School was just a place for friends and fun Study was the last thing ever to be done His name was on every list that displayed trouble Too often he was the centre of attention Hurlled through endless fines and even suspension Teachers always complained A foul fish was he named For every odd act he was to be blamed To my office he often came Sent by teachers who knew not How to handle a boy gone insane The victim of my wrath many a times Strangely I never saw any rebellious signs He had a reason and logic For every blame put to his name His dignity he struggled to maintain Taking every reprimand with pain To me he felt quite sane My reactions I was forced to change His defiance I realized Was his tactic for survival For being an orphan as was he In a world so treacherous In a family not so fortunate To have much luxury or even guidance Left on his own, he was forced to see How the weak were crushed Their needs feelings and desires Away in the wilderness often thrust And I remembered those years When a little boy was he Innocent was his smile Yet mysterious were the eyes There was never a complaint

Rather he was quiet and in restraint The change that was there In the days of his adolescence I could see it was not real Deep down he was still the same Charismatic was his personality For children old and young Who followed him as their boss Though he never called them for this cause He was bold and daring A heroic symbol for so many Recognizing his virtue of truth and honesty His quality of leadership admittedly strange I knew he could be great If only some things could change To my office I often called him Talked to him but listened much more Engaged him in work that was rewarding Asked teachers who were close To work on his confidence and poise That may change his outlook on life Put him on a journey to help find His worth for real that was Through praise that was genuine For the little tasks that he did Giving weight to his opinion To his ideas and to his suggestions. We managed to change some atrocious signs Trying to give him the confidence That for me he was like a son I talked about his strengths To everyone and on every front Momentary were his misdoings Openly I tried to convince everyone And soon he became a friend I trusted him but respected his privacy Believed him in whatever he said Helped him in making decisions for himself Failing in most subjects he was Till the Cambridge University exams he took Where up and above to many he stood Giving just a glimpse of the intelligence he possessed But he was in danger of faltering again Betrayed by some not convinced of his worth My message to him that I for one cared Convinced him that of opportunity there was no dearth And I was happy when one day he said Teacher you were on my side When most of them had left You believed in me and that gave me courage For you I have love and respect Till this day today I meet him with zeal He makes sure he's there For every little chore for me And I believe that one day He will grow up to be A man of strength and values Not common in the world today He will be the leader of virtue That was once misguided But was always there In the core of his nature But somehow I feel this too For whatever he's

gone through Though he is a friend to so many Inside him there is loneliness Though many he can influence and mould His own life for others in the world Will always remain a tale largely untold.

The author is a lecturer at the University of Management and Technology Lahore.

To Madam, with Love

By Ali Hamza

I was quite lost as a student when I entered my A-Level course. I had done quite well in my O' Levels (which was quantified in terms of the praise I received from my family), and that boosted my ego to the extent that I ended up celebrating my success for the next year and a half. Throughout this time, while I was busy lazing around, socializing and pulling pranks on faculty (which gave me quite a notorious reputation at college), there was this one person who helped me maintain my 'brightness' in tact, as opposed to letting it fade away.

Sonu Rehman will always be one of the most graceful women I would have ever come across. Independent yet sensitive to everyone around her, she is that special leader who even follows to guide others. What I value most about her is not simply the way one observes her from the outside, but the way she was from within and the way she used to connect with others at that inner level!

I would hardly attend a class or two for the rest of my courses, but when it came to Mrs. Rehman one could not but be punctual for her session. It would worry the student if it would worry her. Not because of fear of her anger, but because of love and genuine respect for her. On top of that she was wise enough to keep our attention focused on the topic of discussion - making notes was compulsory. Even the worst of us would be unconsciously forced to collect our wavering thoughts and pay attention. It was not an easy subject; we were studying History! And not easy History either. We

had to study Europe between the two World Wars, and the Tudor period in British history. She deliberately chose these specific periods out of the massive choice in the A-Level History syllabus. She did this to make the coursework challenging and interesting at the same time. In short she had a passion for the subject and she was hell bent upon spreading.

And this was not it. She would arrange educational excursions, exclusively for her students. More than anything, it made us feel special compared to the rest of our batch-mates. Someday we would be at the Waziristan Mosque in the walled city of Lahore, watching the entire neighborhood from a rooftop; and another day we would be driving all the way up to Malot (near Kallar Kahar) to sit at the edge of the world and observe the grand battlefield where the Indian Rajas once fought against Alexander the Great. And then, to top it all up, she would call us over to her place, serve us delicious coffee milkshakes and samosas, and make us watch movies on Stalin, Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth,

Hitler and others. How could we not get involved? How could we not love her to bits? How could we not make an effort, even if it was intended just to make her happy?!

As a teacher, Mrs. Rehman had little hope in my performance in the final exams. She believed in my capabilities, but, given my situation at that time, she wasn't expecting much from me. Yet, we became great friends. Our friendship didn't flourish during class hours, but right afterwards. She would hold me back to tell me about my poor performance and somehow or the other, by the end of our discussion, we would be talking about everything else but my performance. That is when my real education took place. We discussed philosophy and literature, she would get me involved in debates and push me to participate in declamation and poetry recitation competitions; we even discussed

my personal problems. She gave me enough confidence from within, so much so that even with all my bad reputation, and its effects on my self esteem, I got to play the lead role in our annual play (and even gave my first autographs for that performance!).

As I said, she helped me keep my 'brightness' in The day I got my A-Level result, I was quite surprised to have even passed the examination. The surprise was much more pleasant for Sonu Rehman. I got a 'C' in History, which by the way is considered quite a respectable grade for the subject. Mrs. Rehman was extremely happy because she expected me to fall somewhere in the E (or below) category. She just couldn't understand how I got that grade! ... But I did!

While I hardly studied a word for all my other subjects, I put in my maximum effort for the History exam. I don't know why I did that - I was hardly in the frame of mind, but when I look back, I realize that deep within me there was just too much love for this seventy year old, twenty-at-heart woman. She had more energy in her than twenty teachers combined, she was involved in every extracurricular activity, she was loved and respected by everyone around her; she was the most sought after personality at college. For her every effort was worth it. Disappointing her would have meant disappointing myself!

Today, even after twelve years, Mrs. Rehman has all her elements in place. Every now and then when I meet her, I get that same innocent feeling and comfort I used to have while sitting with her after class. I still remember everything she taught me. In fact she was the person with whom I began my intellectual journey. She is the first teacher who made me understand my true talents - not just by teaching History, but by making me experience and appreciate a many-sided life in college.

As time passes, college education is becoming more and more competitive.

Students pay extra money (in addition to the handsome amount paid as college fee) to get the best grades possible - to land in the best universities and to get the best jobs. In this new rat race, one is inclined to lose out on many other aspects of one's own internal make up - the talents we have, the dreams we dream. In such times, we need more and more people like Sonu Rehman. People who don't just carry their pupils through academics, but who also reach out to their inner selves and help them realize their true potential as multidimensional individuals.

I can be thankful, I can be eulogistic but I cannot put in words the love I have for this friend of mine, who, by some great luck, was also my teacher.

And guess what?? This feeling is verymutual!

The author is a musician. He is a guitarist and vocalist in the popular rock band Noori

Woven into the Fabric of My Life, My Teacher

By Anonymous

I have been fortunate to have been at the receiving end of many enlightening teachers and educationists all my life. Part of the charm of studying at a convent (mission school) was that when I emerged, my world view was not myopic and that I was not preferential towards patriarchal hegemony. Instead I knew I could embrace my own gender-centric identity while stumbling over various coming off age experiences.

There was one moment in time though, when a certain teacher raised the bar. It was in a university that did not believe in setting any standards other than how much money could be milled in against useless new students, who just needed a degree on stamp paper. It was an institution empty of the academic challenge that college life is supposed to present one with. The challenge that tests the pristine preconceived notions that at least my sheltered notion had preset.

I was in a new city: having lived my entire existence as an only child, I was used to people pandering to my daily needs. Here, I was alone, without the routine vehicles of comfort that I was accustomed to. Car, domestic help, a large space to myself; I had chosen another life over all these corporeal aids. Then my boyfriend died. And I found myself back at home. This time, to return to that university was not just about a coming off age obstacle. It was a stubborn affixation to trudge on.

With a classroom full of first years,

all bristling with the alpha desire to be right, it could not have been easy for her to identify that one student was just going through the motions. She was barely older than me, yet she was entrusted with the responsibility to teach a bunch of first years the basics of the human mind. And she took it without any inhibition. She would engage the meek ones into giving their opinions, she would draw the back benchers into stimulating discussions and she would be a friend without ever blurring the lines of respect. And I repeat she was barely a year older than I was.

We would engage in class only when something with a spiritual nuance caught my ear. It was perhaps a self serving psyche but after my whole world had fallen apart, for me it was an appropriate defense mechanism.

Perhaps the dean of my department asked her to keep an eye on me, or perhaps my monochrome responses made her ask why this one student was such, either way she started acting as a scaffold. The first time I remember acknowledging something was wrong with me when one winter morning; she asked if she could speak with me. We went and sat on the stairs at the entrance and oblivious of the human thoroughfare. With the sharp sheets of winter sun blurring the outlines, I had my first posthumous conversation about him with a stranger.

And I know, this sounds much more dramatic in retrospect. A young girl loosing her boyfriend and a young teacher acting as a life line. Back then, it was just about the necessities. I had to continue and she was an empathetic support system. She was a teacher in the classroom, where she and I had a secret silent relationship. And outside, via the world wide web, we grew closer.

I think she understood that I needed this intellectual and emotional connection to stumble through the grief. Her empathy never reeked of pity and she never enabled

any lasting dependency. I remember we discovered that we both loved to set new standards for ourselves and daily discourse over Rumi, human emotions and silly girl things became my secret that led me through each day. With her I also discovered that scientific enquiry need not be void of spiritual affinity.

Our relationship was not held together with any ties or strings. We were equals in and out of the classroom. Where she taught and I learnt, there were also moments when she would suspend her disbelief and hear not just me, but my fellow peers when we created our own perceptions about what we considered orthodox theories formulated by reductive minds. Considering our country's system of authoritative education, our classroom was not a place with any hard binding rules or distinct boundaries. It was a tiny just island that fed a just world view in the minds of young individuals creating their own groundings. And she was the inclusive young elder who governed.

She left the university. Our relationship became a part of my daily fabric: not as an active participant but as the seeds for a new lease on life.

The author is a freelance writer and photographer. She has the improbable dream of owning an animal shelter one day

Teacher as Parent

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Bailing Students

By Anita Ghulam Ali

This is about a night that gave me some assurance that I had met my commitments as a teacher in some small amount.

I was lying in bed reading a comic (Tom and Jerry) when the telephone rang. (There were no mobiles then) The call was from the Saddar Police Station, saying some one wanted to talk to me. I looked at my watch. 12.30 am. Past midnight. I said, "Put whoever it is on the line." I heard pleading, "Please come to the thana. I have been in the lock-up since morning after I had an accident around St. Joseph's College. I have damaged the Minister's car and have already paid him an amount that will cover all cost of repair. The SHO refuses to let me out on bail. Please come.'

I got into my little red beetle Volks Wagon and sped off, hoping that my parents who live across the way had not seen the lights go on and off. I walked into the thana as though I was the I.G (all drama!) I was greeted by the SHO who told me the whole story. I said call the boy, I want to talk to him alone. He said I would have to go to the lock-up but when I got up to go he changed his mind. (I think we were both playing games with each other) When my student Rizwan, who had a Chinese mother and a Pathan father who worked in the Middle East, and wasn't around, appeared, he was in tears. Tall, intelligent, sometimes cheeky, now completely deflated.

As he came in on a dramatic note, I asked him to come near me. When he was close enough, I pretended to cross question him, I asked him what he was doing near a girls' college etc. I told him to bend down

and twisted his ears, gave him a gentle, almost loving slap on the back of his head. (All this to make the SHO happy). Then I told the SHO to prepare papers to accept bail from me, since I was a gazetted officer, an adult, in my senses and a responsible citizen, and a Government servant. He was quiet and suddenly looked very thoughtful. Looking at the clock, I asked him to hurry up, since I have the requisite qualification and also to send for some tea for me. (Dreading the prospect of drinking out of dirty cups and sweet tea). When I told him if he had any difficulty I could speak to his superiors, even though it was 4 am.

Then he spat it out - the Minister of Education (a childhood friend of mine) whose car had been damaged, "had ordered for Rizwan to be in the lock-up for four days to teach him a lesson" That last bit sent my temper soaring. I knew the Minister's bedroom number and phoned him. He had barely said hello when I went for him, hammer and tongs! What did he mean by throwing his weight around and without legal justification?' He was annoyed at this: "How come you are there at the thana at this time of the night? I am going to call uncle and aunty and tell them: your students are your responsibility in the college, not after." "That is where you are wrong. I take full responsibility for their behaviour and I have come to defend his rights. You have no business to make this a case of personal vendetta. Go to bed. I am going to the press!" At which I could see him mentally take a leap in the air - knowing me since school days at St Lawrence Convent School, Karachi.

His tone changed and he wanted urgently to talk to the SHO. I could only hear him say Ji, Sir. The SHO was a changed man but he wanted to have his bit of the glory. 'Mein tu keh raha tha, Sahib sun naheen rahya thay.' (I was telling the Sahib all along but he wasn't listening). Well, I thought, it was over. I asked for the papers to sign to which he came up with another gem, "Hum ladies ka bail accept naheen kartay hain." (We don't accept bail from

ladies.) Why? I blew my fuse - I argued, took hold of the dirty books and read him the relevant paras etc. Finally he dained to accept Rizwan's uncle's signature and let Rizwan go. Rizwan's uncle by the way had been at the police station since 8pm with money and a tiffin carrier.

When everything was done, it was almost time for Fajjar. I waited till Rizwan came skipping out of the lock-up. He came towards me, diving towards my feet. Anticipating this, I got him mid-way, pulled him up with his thick black oily hair and gave him another (this time hard) hit on the back; led him to the car, stuffed him in, told him to get lost. Leave the police station immediately and told him to ring me when he got home.

I reached home early morning and the earlier call from Rizwan crying like a baby saying thank you, made my day. Rizwan is now grown up, married and a successful man. But he still comes and hugs me. I love it.

Guiding the Girls

By Sobia Usman

Apa Shamsa was our camp commander in a Girl Guides summer camp. She had strictly told us not to call her 'Miss' or 'Madam' or 'Teacher'. She wanted us to think of her as an older sister and so we called her 'Apa'.

Apa Shamsa stood for values such as discipline and integrity. She had trained us to follow her strict regimes to perfection in the very first week of the camp. "You are going to be mothers one day, and if mothers aren't disciplined, what's going to happen to the rest of us?" She would tell us.

We fully realized how she had transformed us when we returned home after the end of the summer camp. She had trained us to wake up before sunrise, go for patrolling, have breakfast and then either sweep the grounds ourselves or get them swept under our own supervision. Then each one of us had different tasks assigned. The magic of her warmth was such that each one of us happily did all this, trying hard not to displease her in any way.

We fully realized how she had transformed us when we returned home after the end of the summer camp. It was because of the poise that the summer camp taught me that I was able to become the Head Girl of my school.

Today when I myself am a teacher, I deeply cherish her memory as a teacher who was warm yet disciplined. When my students say I am their 'Favourite teacher', it reminds me of my favourite teacher whose training brought me this far.

The author is a teacher in Chakwal

A letter to my Teacher Saving One life, One World

By Adnan Khalil

I wasn't the best of students. Never had I been one, nor did I harbour any ambitions of becoming one. Somehow, I had managed to scrape through life at school at the Government High School No. 2, Bank Road Mardan. It had all worked out fine until I reached tenth grade. School work got tougher. I found it harder and harder to cope with it. Before I knew it, it was time for me to take my mock exams for Matriculation.

It was the science subjects. That's where the problem lay. Specially biology. I was so bad at the subject that I had begun to question my academic ability as a whole. Our biology teacher was a middle aged man named Zafar Iqbal. He also happened to be our class teacher. Even though he inquired from me time and again about my poor performance, I always managed to dodge the question. The fact that Sir. Zafar had to cope with around fifty other students helped me conveniently elude his attention.

My mock exams were just around the corner. I had a decision to make, I could either continue with my studies, or I could just quit. Being a young man with an impulsive temperament, I made the wrong choice; I decided there was no use studying further.

I could have run away from my home, but I needed time to make a plan. In the meanwhile, my exams had started. I left

all my exam papers blank. I didn't know what else to do. Nobody seemed to care. Some of my friends mocked me, but I could live with that.

When the result came home, my father's temper hit the roof. He locked my wailing mother in a room and tied me with a rope to a pillar. He beat me for a little while and then left me there to ponder over what I had done.

I hated my class teacher more than ever now. Why did he have to send the result home? Didn't he know it would land me in trouble?

The next day, I didn't go to school at all. I went to a nearby bazaar and got to see so many jobs that didn't involve books or reading. I went to a mechanic's shop and asked him to hire me. I still remember how he offered me the job for fifteen rupees a day. But there was something that was not right. I saw the other apprentices at the workshop, their clothes in tatters and their faces soiled. Could I adopt this life? The harsh reality of life began to unfold in front of me; my school was a safe haven that I could turn to. But it offered no hope. The workshop was a wretched place to be at, but at least it would pay me.

Not knowing what to do, out of habit I returned to my school to spend another pointless day there, not knowing this day would change my life. I hadn't expected anyone to note my absence, as many children bunked classes. I was surprised then, when at break time, I was summoned to the staff room. My teacher Zafar Iqbal was waiting there for me. He asked me kindly where I had been yesterday, why I hadn't come to school, and why I had left all my papers blank. Unable to control myself, I burst out at the man responsible for my misery and told him the entire story. He listened quietly to my tirade. After I had finished, he opened up our biology book and asked me which topic I had the most difficulty in understanding. I pointed it out to him.

“This?” he laughed jovially. “All you had to do in this was understand the given diagram.”

Totally confused by his attitude, I asked him to explain it to me and so he did, being true to his word, using only the diagram. Being done with this topic, I pointed another one to him, and he handled it the same way. His method made sense. Innovatively refreshing, I found that I could digest something as boring and as difficult to understand as biology, by merely learning it through a different method, using diagrams.

From that time onwards, it was hard to get away from Sir Zafar. He would call me during break time, during my free periods, sometimes even during the games periods. I used his method of teaching in other subjects as well, especially in the science subjects, and it worked. That period of three months was miraculous, as I grew in knowledge and understanding exponentially.

Before I knew it, I was one of the better students in my class. Sir Zafar had managed to put light to my long extinguished flare for education. I passed my Matriculation exam in First Division and topped the Mardan district in all three science subjects! Since then, it has been an upwards journey. I found that using outside-the-box thinking like Sir Zafar's, I could understand things more quickly and more effectively.

I completed my F. Sc and then did my Bachelors in medicine. I went on to do research at the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission in molecular biology. But my passion lay elsewhere.

I returned to my hometown and began to teach science at the school level. After some time, I was offered a job at a renowned school in Lahore so I moved to Lahore. In the meanwhile, I began to train as a teacher trainer. My methods were deemed outside-the-box and so they were.

But they were also very effective and why shouldn't they be; I had an excellent example in front of me in the shape of Sir Zafar; I had myself experienced the efficacy of his methods.

Today, I am a certified teacher trainer for the Punjab Education Foundation. I have held many workshops in the Punjab province and beyond, and have helped hundreds of teachers with their teaching styles and methodology.

If it wasn't for my teacher, I don't know where I would have ended up. Sir Zafar, thank you for making me who I am. I only have one regret: I wish I had thanked you earlier.

The author is a trainer of teachers, for Pakistan Education Foundation and Idara Taleem o Aagahi.

The Believer

By Anonymous

She looked so ordinary and dressed so simply that even professional people-watchers sitting by the roadside didn't look at her twice. She, on the other hand, looked keenly at everything and everyone. Her knowledge about other human beings, especially children, was extraordinary. I was sure that she read my mind every time she looked at me but I didn't mind that at all. Actually, I wanted her to look at me often because every glance from her kind eyes made me feel good.

I don't remember the exact day Miss Parveen entered my life. I just remember being a sad, un-motivated, fifth grader who was not interested in teachers and wished they would leave her alone. My entire life was a mess. At night, my alcoholic father wouldn't let anyone sleep with his loud, vicious behavior. During the day, a mentally deranged nun at my school would turn me into her scapegoat for every problem. That year, I made a serious attempt to blend into the classroom furniture by not moving my eyes or any part of my body during lessons. But somewhere in that turmoil, Miss Parveen's pale, thin face and her twinkling, dark eyes started attracting my attention. I clearly remember the embarrassing incident which made her my friend for life.

One hot day, as she read to our class in her clear, soothing voice, I felt a relentless desire to sleep. I must have dozed off because I opened my eyes to see the whole class giggling and staring at me. Miss Parveen smiled kindly and held my gaze briefly before calmly resuming the reading lesson. She never reproached me or demanded the reason for my lack of attention.

This wonderful teacher treated me, during the worst year of my student life, like a 'star' pupil. Sometimes she would say something very nice about the entire class while looking at me. She did not know anything about my dark, family secrets or why that crazy nun was after me. Yet, she made me think that I was a genuinely likable, good human being. Her attitude towards all the students was very respectful and I felt particularly valued because she made me feel as smart and capable as the brightest kid in our class. She wrote encouraging comments on my homework assignments and nodded appreciatively when I joined a classroom discussion. She was a true example of "positive reinforcement"!

I don't think that I could have graduated from Class Five, or continued to believe that I was a worthy person, if Miss Parveen had not rescued me emotionally from the malicious people in my life. Physical wounds can heal but emotional scars remain forever. In a world full of cruel humans, she understood why some children stop believing in themselves. She also knew that bearing anger and insults can destroy a child's self-confidence and belief in one's self. Maybe she learnt all this from her own experience. One of her students said that Miss Parveen had to work most of her life to support her family after her father's death. She avoided getting married in order to allow her young siblings to grow up in her care. Her family lived in poverty and suffered unbearable criticism from relatives and 'friends' but she and her siblings stayed close and loving towards each other. After many years, a very pleasant widower and successful engineer, asked Ms. Parveen to marry him. Free from her family responsibilities, she accepted his proposal and is now living happily in Canada.

All my life, I've carried Miss Parveen's opinion about myself close to my heart. Scientific studies have shown that just one loving person in a child's life can be the source of lifelong success. Miss

Parveen, my fifth grade teacher, is definitely my source of worldly and personal success. As a student, doctor, wife, mother, daughter, sister and friend, I've derived my confidence and energy from the memory of Miss Parveen's encouraging smile. Whenever someone has tried to put me down, or whenever I've told myself that I cannot do anything right, the image of Miss Parveen has rescued me. I cannot doubt my own capabilities for too long because the happy memories of a caring teacher help me to believe in myself again.

I'm one of the luckiest people on earth. I have seen, and met, "THE BELIEVER", THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN THE INHERENT GOODNESS OF EVERYCHILD.

The author is currently juggling her roles as a Community Physician, mother and wife. She lives in USA, and spends a lot of time thinking about her family and friends in Pakistan.

The Power of Obligation

By Raheela S.Zafar

I wonder if she really attended the orientation meeting organized for the B.Sc STUDENTS, or I missed noticing her there, I kept trying to recall...

On that day there were girls everywhere :----timid new admissions, confident and familiar old students, confused mothers, indifferent fathers, few younger brothers and sisters whom no babysitter has dared to keep so mothers were forced to bring them along, a couple of grandparents who were probably substituting for their busy daughters or were important enough to personally inspect the future alma mater of their grand daughters, who had done their F.Sc and had joined the B.Sc class.

The first day of the B Sc students was no different from what I had been observing for the past eleven years of my teaching experience. The old students of the college were reviving past memories of the years they had spent together , secretly praying for some of the old teachers not to turn up this session, talking at the speed I usually call "90 miles per hour".

The new admissions were either sitting aloof, just observing the teachers and the old girls of the college taking mental notes of the girls they would probably consider for future friendship, or some of the more outgoing ones had turned themselves into a group and were commenting on the college and the old students . There I noticed her.

She was somewhat distant. She did not seem confused but cross and irritated .I glanced at her and took quick notes , you

know teachers are good at it---- she was tall with long brown hair, fair complexion, blue eyes with black eye liner and heavy mascara, black headscarf .Her name was Anooshay and she was from Kabul, Afghanistan. This was her first experience of studying in an institution where English is the medium of instruction, and she was not good at it. Her whole family was scattered in different parts of the world. Elder brothers were probably staying in some western country, uncles and father were doing some sort of business that made them roam from Kabul to Pakistan and America, and her mother was shunting among the scattered progeny of hers. Anooshay was staying with her younger siblings. She told me and the rest of the teachers about the present day situation in Afghanistan ,as she kept visiting her birthplace every now and then and how it had been devastated, with all the ruins ,crippled children , barren fields and the presence of the people who do not belong in their land. There was grief in her voice and a shadow of depression in her deep blue eyes.

She was not good in her studies, but extremely intelligent. Whenever she concentrated on any topic she asked brilliant questions and during the practical hour she followed even the most difficult instructions, which rest of the "very good English students' never followed properly. But what to do about the fact that most of the time she was distracted. The academic year was getting tougher and tougher. Her result card was getting more red marks than blue ones. None of her family members ever turned up for the parent teacher meeting.

I could see all this was happening , but hardly knew what to do to bring the desired result __to motivate her enough to concentrate on her studies ,to pass the exams ,and to get the university degree for which her parents were laboring so hard .One fine day I got a chance, when she brought her two brothers, two lads, of nine and ten years old, who were jumping with excitement to be in "apa's college",

fascinated by the labs, big classrooms and such a big canteen. They were very cute and one really felt like talking to them, although they hardly understood Urdu or English. I requested her to be our interpreter. I kept talking to the children. When I asked them who helped them in their studies. They pointed towards her.

“But she will not be able to teach you in future, as she is not studying herself,” I said playfully teasing. As I said this her face darkened and she did not translate the sentence to her brothers.

The very next day she came to my office and with brimming eyes she said that she will need to be her brothers' teacher as there will be no one else to do the job.

“Tell me how I should start to catch up”, she said with the determination.

Anooshay's little brothers had steered her to the path of learning in a way all of us teachers had been unable to.

The author is a college lecturer in Lahore

The Power of Suggestion

By **Mauna Khan**

As a teacher I visually connect with my students. Eye contact is very important to me. This is how I understand their issues and get a sense of who they are.

Shahzad, my student in grade four would just not meet my gaze. He was withdrawn and often lost in day dreaming. I was teaching Shahzad at an elite private school.

I requested his mother to please come and see me. He was a middle child, with an older brother and a younger sister, she told me. She also said he was 'useless', that he could not study. I asked her if she helped him with his homework. "No, there is no point wasting any time on that child!" was her response

He was clearly manifesting his mother's beliefs about him. I told the mother to pay him a little attention. "I know he is not doing well right now, but as a teacher I can tell that he is a topper."

His mother was a sensible woman and softened her behaviour towards Shahzad. Gradually he started to make eye contact with me. Slowly he went up from getting his usual zero to scoring a few points on tests. We celebrated his milestones in class and cheered for him.

And the journey began...

When Shahzad sat for his O' Level exams, he got straight As. He did the two year A Level program in just one year.

What happened here? The moment his mother's expectation level went up, he

started connecting with himself and with the world around him. That is why you may not be consciously aware that you know something until someone asks you a question; it is their belief in your ability that motivates you to somehow come up with an answer. Such is the power of suggestion. Such is the power hidden in our words, waiting to be unleashed.

The author is a yoga instructor and mental health expert in Islamabad

The Root of All Evil

By Nazia Zafar

During the four years that I have been a teacher at the Sohan Center, a center of non-formal learning for children from the deprived community, I have consistently faced one challenge: teaching basic manners to the new comers.

One such child was Abdallah. It seemed as if Abdallah was sick of his life, or that he was seeking some kind of revenge from everyone around him. Using abusive language, hitting other children, stealing their things and then lying with perfection were some of his routine behaviours. His father was a drug addict and a rag picker who spent most of his time outside the house. Abdallah seemed to have some of these habits too; he too was a bit of a wanderer.

A little attention and love may work with some children but not Abdallah. I would tell him to work like the good boy that he was. His reply would be, "But I am not a good boy; I am rude and obnoxious." I kept trying to befriend him, to crack a joke with him as soon as he would enter class, or modify my lesson plan based on what I thought he might respond to better. Slowly he became regular. One day he was absent. I asked him the next day what the matter had been.

His father had hit Abdallah so he had run away from home for a day. That is why he had been absent from school. He then told me the gut-wrenching details of how this father beat his own son. Tied with chains. The father would come home and beat Abdallah and his mother. This time it was because there had been a petty theft in the market and someone told the father that Abdallah was behind it. The father did not

pay any heed to Abdallah's pleas that he was innocent. He kept him tied in the heat of the sun for five hours. Without water. The mother who tried to intervene was also beaten black and blue. That is why Abdallah was sick of his life and even wanted to end it.

Abdullah had confided in me. He had found an adult whom he could trust, and he was now willing to give school a chance. He now started to respond well to the little things I did to make him feel loved and cared for, like I would ask him to write something on the board or encourage him to participate in extra curricular activities.

He was now living to his potential. He worked hard and soon met the standard to be able to join a regular school, which is where he is studying now.

My student Abdullah is clear proof of how adults, especially parents distort a perfectly pure and innocent child and turn him into a 'problem-child.'

The author is a teacher at the Sohan Aagahi Center for non-formal learning, Idara Taleem o Aagahi, Islamabad

These Orphans with Parents

By Miss Shahzadi

Going to people's houses and convincing them to send their children to school is not an easy task. It's one thing to set up a school and to provide education, but what if there are no takers? Or not as many takers as you would have liked to see? When I took up this task I found that people were very suspicious of us. 'How do I know you are giving my child the full stipend that the donor is sending for him? How do I know you are not keeping half of it yourself? Building trust was one issue.

There were other parents who were reluctant to send their children because of the inconsistency they had seen in NGO projects. 'NGOs come and then they wrap up and disappear. Why should we unsettle our children from their work for a few months or years of education?'

Worse than their criticism against us was some parents' attitude towards their own children. Twelve year old Mehboob was promoted from grade one to two. . His father was blind and so he worked at a workshop to support the family. He had a slight speech impairment,, a stutter which was curable. When I suggested this to the mother she was not interested in getting any treatment for Mehboob. 'Leave it jee, this way people feel sorry for him and give him a generous tip.'

I try my best to be a teacher and a friend to these children. I am very particular about my clothes and appearance so that my students learn to be neat and clean too. I see how my actions and words have more of an impact on these young minds than they do on their parents' time-hardened

thinking. I try to remain hopeful. Perhaps one day...

The author is a teacher at the Idara Taleem-o-Aagahi Drop-in center for children working as domestic labor. She has been teaching since 1996.

Teacher as Support

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Breaking the Cocoon

By Sadia Nawaz

I am a beauty parlour instructor at a vocational training center. I have taught many students over the years. This story is about a lady who had been a housewife all her life. It was out of necessity that she had now stepped out of the safety of her house to teach herself a useful skill. Tasneem was particularly shy and nervous, unlike other women, none of whom fear me as a teacher.

Tasneem was afraid to speak with me, her hands would tremble if she was practicing a task and I stood by watching. I knew that the other girls would easily ask me if they had trouble understanding something, but Tasneem was so hesitant to speak that she wouldn't ask me or any of the other members of the class.

Practice and a little more attention. That was my solution. I would stand by her and give her practice in the skills we were learning. If I felt she wasn't doing something right, I would hold her hand and guide it to show her how to hold hair while cutting it or how to tilt and hold a hair dryer. Once she started to relax she told me that she had been afraid of me! She also told me how this course was something that she did want to do but her necessity was her main motivation.

To help her overcome her fear, I involved Tasneem in different activities such as decorating the class. I asked her to be the group leader when we did group work. As the leader, she had a chance to have more interaction with me. Thus the fear factor slowly vanished.

This incident made me realize that a teacher's job is not just to come and teach;

no matter what the age of the students and what the content of the teaching is, a teacher has a psychological bond with the students that must be honoured.

The author is a beautician course instructor at the Women Welfare and Development Center, Islamabad.

Confessions of a Teacher

By *Faheema*

I am a teacher at a drop-in center for children who work as child labourers. This way children who work can come in the afternoon, or whenever their work schedule permits them to come and attend school and acquire vocational skills at the drop-in center.

Sumaira was fourteen years old when her mother brought her to be admitted to the center. She worked as a domestic servant until 2.p.m. She had attended school up till class fourth and then had dropped out to help her parents support the family and to send her younger siblings to school.

I often wondered why Sumaira usually had a lost look on her face and would only speak in monosyllables. I would often try to talk to her to find out what lurked behind those troubled eyes.

It turned out that Sumaira was the eldest in her family. She wanted to attend regular school but had to drop- out and work for the family.

Sumaira is now in class fifth at the center. She is also learning to stitch. She is good at whatever she does, but her circumstances are a constant source of anxiety for her. One day she is worried about her siblings' well-being, the next day the beating she receives from her parents upsets her and sometimes it is her employers who are harsh to her for the slightest of mistakes. She tries very hard to shake off all these memories for the three hours that she is at school.

I have managed to gain her trust. Sumaira shares with me her frustrations and her sense of deprivation. She tells me how if her little sister wants the clip or toy that she has, she gives it to her sister. All I can offer her is some moral support. I tell her she has to strengthen herself for her own sake and for the sake of all those other lives that are depending on her. I myself am not sure how she can do that.

Sumaira had been absent from school for some days. One day she came herself to tell me that she won't be coming to the center as she was unwell. She looked quite ill. I sent her to the doctor.

Later I asked the doctor about her and found out that stress was causing her illness; she was constantly brooding over her situation, over how her father would beat her, and why he did not earn money to support them all. Searching in vain to find the answers to these questions, Sumaira had fallen ill. The doctor also said that she needed complete rest. I knew that although she could take time off from the center, her employers where she worked as a maid would fire her if she didn't turn up for work for so many days.

I felt helpless in the face of Sumaira's teeming problems. All I could do was pray that God may soften her father's heart so Sumaira can lead a normal and happy life.

Faheema is a teacher at the Idara Taleem o Aagahi drop in center in Rawalpindi.

Darkness Illumined

By Saima Ammar

I came back to Pakistan after doing my A' Levels from England where I had grown up. Visually impaired, there was no place where I could find audio books here, no centre, or foundation. My friends and family would read books out to me and I would record them. Thus I managed to graduate from college.

Intelligent, ambitious and hard working I wanted to take the CSS exam and join the Foreign Service. There was very little room for a visually impaired person in the Civil Service of Pakistan. There were no recorded books to prepare for the exam. There was also a rule barring people like myself from taking this exam. I wasn't looking for special privileges or quota, I wanted to apply on open merit. The amount of support I have received over the years from my friends, family and teachers, does not permit me to avail any special advantages. All I needed was a chance to prove myself.

I was determined. I found out that the Masters in International Relations offered at the Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) covered 400 marks worth of the CSS exam. If I did this degree, I would be at least partially prepared for the exam. And so I enrolled at the QAU, thinking this would be a short cut to my dream.

Dr Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema was the Head of the Department at the QAU. Supportive and practical, he told me I would have to read newspapers and journals to sit for the CSS exam. 'Who will read to you?' he asked. But he was convinced that the task was not beyond my ability. Sure enough, I topped among the 1000 students who sat for the exam. Dr Cheema bent the

rules and allowed me to sit for the CSS exam despite my disability, or perhaps because of it. But the system was bigger than his support or my talent.

The system was not on my side. I now had a Masters degree in International Relations and I had no idea what to do with it. That is when I joined the Pakistan Foundation Fighting Blindness (PFFB). My vision has always been to integrate blind people into mainstream society by, for example, recording audio books; I want to help them accept their disability and then build on it.

I was happy doing my recordings at the PFFB. We did most of the recordings in Urdu since most blind children were somehow from deprived communities, for whom Urdu was more accessible than English would have been.

A boy from Dir changed that one fine day. Gul Zameen had lost his eyesight when he was in matric. He was adamant to study further in English and not in Urdu. Trusting my instinct that told me that the boy would go places, I gave the go-ahead for making recordings in English. Gul Zameen went on to do his Masters in English Literature. He is now a lecturer at the National University of Modern Languages.

Just as Dr Cheema tried to make a crack in the system to make a passage for me, I too changed the existing status quo by starting recordings in English.

I find immense satisfaction in doing the work that I do. I draw comfort from the memories of students who have benefitted from PFFB audio recordings and are today going ahead with their lives; like Gul Zameen, like Aqil Sajjad who is doing his PhD in Particle Physics at Harvard University. When you lose the gift of sight, there is very little you can do, very few activities you can participate in. I wake up every morning with the hope that I can support the blind to lead as good a life as they did when they had their sight. In all of

God's creation there is some miracle and very few of us live up to that potential. I try to be a catalyst for that potential to be realized. The miracle is within each Gul Zameen and each Aqil Sajjad, waiting to be born...

Saima Ammar is the Chief Executive Officer of the Pakistan Foundation Fighting Blindness, Islamabad.

Face Your Fear

By A Teacher

It happened when I was in class ninth. I enjoyed studying. I also loved to draw and often took part in drawing competitions. But other than that, I had never taken part in any other school event. I was too shy to speak in front of people.

There was a fancy dress show being planned in our school. Many of my friends were excited to take part in the show. My class teacher Ms. Najma asked me to join in the fun, but I refused, saying that I won't be able to do it. Ms. Najma was not going to accept a no for an answer. She told me stories of famous people from history and their achievements, she told me about will-power and about Man's status is the best of all creation. If I was a good student and a talented artiste, I should also prove myself in other fields. Take it as a challenge. Just do it.

Needless to say, I decided to be a part of the dress show. As we cued up back stage, waiting for our turn, I was very nervous. As soon as I stepped on the stage, my anxiety vanished and I thoroughly enjoyed what I was doing.

Miss Najma's advice has helped me each time I have had to choose between facing a challenge in life or walking away from it.

For the Sake of Survival

By Mrs Fehmida Khan

I am a lady instructor in Social Welfare. We offer vocational training to girls and teach them stitching and embroidery etc. On the surface it is a technical job but we have to nurture the girls in every way. Many of these girls are dealing with multiple problems at home and are under severe stress.

I had one such girl in my class. Sumaira was quiet and withdrawn. Anyone would be if they had so many issues weighing on them; her father had passed away, that is why she was not attending regular school anymore. Her brother was unwell and he had to receive blood transfusions every three months. They had no support, financial or otherwise.

I was at a loss. I didn't know what to do. Even though we have so many students and offering financial assistance to all of them is neither possible nor useful, my heart went out to this one girl. I offered to bear her expense at the training center for the next three months and to give some financial support for the blood transfusions.

I know that our goal is to empower these women to take care of their needs, but I also understand that while they are acquiring the skills to fend for themselves, they do need some assistance. Offering someone money is not a creative or long-term solution, but sometimes that is what is needed to enable someone to take care of their own needs in the long term.

The author is a stitching instructor at the Women Welfare and Development Center, Islamabad.

Happily Occupied

By Balques Akhtar

I never wanted to work. I was my husband's beloved wife, a mother of two children. Four years after our wedding, my husband fell from a roof and lost his life. I was twenty years old then. I had no clue how I would take care of my life or provide for my children.

It was then that I started to work. I myself had to support my little family. Having been through all this myself, I understand the need for women to have a skill that they can rely on in time of need.

I had a woman, Sakeena, working as a maid in my house. She was extremely poor and her husband was a drug addict. Even though her husband was alive, he was a burden on the family instead of being a support for them. I asked Sakeena to send her daughter to me in the evenings to learn to stitch.

This would give her a skill that she can be proud of and benefit from. Sakeena said she had neither a sewing machine for the girl to practice nor could she afford to pay for the material. I offered to let her use my machine and to supply her with fabric pieces left over from the stitching I did.

The girl was smart and learnt the work at a good pace. Soon after that someone provided them a sewing machine from Zakat money. Sakeena's daughter started to stitch clothes for people. She has now become such an expert that she can even copy the latest designs! She is now sending her other siblings to school from her modest but consistent earnings.

This fragile girl who used to be frustrated with her own situation is now

happily busy in her work. She has no time to brood over her woes, so she stays happy and occupied

The author is a stitching instructor at the Women Welfare and Development Center, Islamabad.

Learning to Value the Little Good in Me

By Shabana Akram

I am a teacher at the Aagahi Education System. I am neither very important nor am I a great entity, nor do I have such qualities as would draw people to me. But one incident in my life made me feel that I must have some good in me, from which others can benefit.

I was a novice teacher then, teaching class prep, a particularly naughty bunch of kids. Except Omar Arif. Omar didn't do anything. He didn't play, he didn't speak, he didn't study. He wouldn't even take his copies or books out of his bag. If I would insist that he do so, he would either hide or would burst into tears.

This was very strange. I didn't know how to make any sense out of it. I spoke to my head teacher Ms Lubna and with her advice I started to pay him extra attention. Initially he was too afraid to come near me, if I would ask him to read to me he would start to cry out of anxiety.

I then made it a point to ask him about his family everyday, or what he had for breakfast; I would ask him questions that posed no challenge to him and therefore he would have no fear of not getting the answer right. These were questions he wasn't threatened by. Then when it was time to read I would ask him to read first, so he got conditioned that he had to be the first to read and there was no way he could dodge that.

Gradually his fear gave way to ease in communication. He started to eagerly

bring his work to me to get it checked. Specially in English he was now doing better than any child in class prep had ever done.

Omar secured second position in the final exams. More importantly, he was now like other children, enjoying his childhood like a child should. This led me to believe that perhaps, I do have some good in me.

The author of the story is a teacher at the Idara Taleem o Aagahi center for children from the deprived community.

Picking up the Pieces...to Make a Broken Image?

By A Teacher

I have been teaching since 1993. The early years were a bit difficult as people in villages were opposed to girls' education. It took me a while to understand their perspective. They would marry off their daughters while they were still in class one or two.

This story is about such an incident. Fauzia Parveen was the brightest student of our school. She was then in class two. During the summer break she was married to her brother's wife's brother; in watta satta, she was given in exchange for that family giving their daughter to her brother.

Fauzia had been keen to study. A victim of watta satta, and of her in-laws ill-treatment, Fauzia now looked lost and forlorn, to such an extent that she became mentally stressed and nervous. Due to her mental illness she left school. This made me very sad. I would often go to her house to ask after her, to chat with her.

When she would get a little better, I would encourage her to return to school. Together with her parents, I did everything possible to help her get treatment. After a prolonged treatment the child got a little better. But she had forgotten all her school work and was lagging behind the others. Encouraging her, I again started to teach her.

Fauzia's academic career came to an end as she secured the second position in her class fifth exams. I had managed to keep Fauzia in school this long after begging and pleading with her in-laws and

by getting them an exemption from all expenses of her schooling.

Given her situation, I can only pray that May God always keep her in His protection.

The author is a teacher at a Government Girls School in Chiniot.

Recognizing a Student's Need

By Saima Gul

Being my parents' only child I grew up quite spoiled. It was when I graduated from my college, a number of unpleasant events in my life adversely affected my mental health. I could not cope with these events and started to remain depressed, anxious and nervous. I gave up my studies for about a year and half. At that point I realized I should study and my parents encouraged me to seek admission for further studies.

I applied and got admission in the Quaid-e-Azam University in the Defence and Diplomatic Studies Department. The subject was new and challenging and I was not emotionally and mentally strong as yet; the result was that instead of getting better after joining the Masters programme, I started to get worse. Also, I had studied in Urdu medium institutions all my life and the medium of instruction here was English. Nothing was working out for me. My grades were the lowest in our batch.

This is when I started to receive special help from the Head of the Department Professor Brigadier (R) Ahsan ul Haq. I spent one semester in tears, scoring extremely low grades. I even received an expulsion warning from the university; I had to improve my grades or I would have to leave the programme. This is when Professor Haq started paying me extra attention in class. He would ask me a question in class.

Then he would ask another question from a slightly different perspective. He would insist that I make some comment and that my comment should be in English. Initially I would

hesitate, as other students would make fun of me. But gradually, I started to feel like I knew it all from before!

The result of Professor Haq's attention and expectations of me was that my results improved in the second semester. I now felt tremendous confidence in myself. As I was drawn into the class discussions, I started to be more attentive, and once that happened my understanding became clearer too. I graduated from the Masters programme with very good grades. I was also accepted to do internships in two important government departments.

Professor Haq was a well built elderly gentleman. He would always tell us, 'Knowledge is nothing, just use this machine,' as he would tap his first finger on his head.

Today I am a grade 16 officer and a mother of two children. I am leading a respectable and confident existence. None of this would have happened had Professor Ahsan ul Haq not given me the encouragement when I needed it the most.

The author is the chief instructor at the Women Welfare and Development Center.

Connecting the Student and the Scholarship

By Nazia Arif

Ms. Naila was my favourite teacher. Just seeing her enter class used to lighten my burdens. She was short with thick long hair, blessed with the gift of intelligence.

I wasn't good in my studies at first. Ms. Naila changed some of that. She was associated with an NGO by the name of CARE and worked at the government school near my house which I attended. I wanted to be like her one day. She was our science teacher. Science was now the subject I found it the easiest to learn for. Because of Ms. Naila who made it all seem so easy. I secured the third position in the class ninth final exams, which were home exams.

She applauded me for my achievement and encouraged me to continue my education beyond matric too. She told me about the multiple benefits of getting an education, trying to convince me to not quit school after class tenth. Initially my reply used to be, 'But I am engaged now and my parents will not allow me to continue my education. They would much rather have me stay at home and learn to do household chores. There are few girls in my family who have studied as far as matric, and no girl has studied beyond this point.'

Life went on and I sat for my matric exams. I passed my exams securing an A grade and getting the highest marks in my own class (Arts section). This, Ms. Naila felt, was all the more reason for me to go for a college education.

She asked to see my mother. She spoke to her about the issue. My mother had her own realities to deal with.

'I would love for my daughter to study,' she said, 'but I live with my two brothers and their families and they will not allow this. My circumstances don't permit me to do what you want me to.'

My uncle, my mother's brother had a son and daughter who had done their matric. It was only the boy who went on to take admission in eleventh grade. Ms. Naila knew what my background was, and how we were financially quite weak too.

Ms. Naila had made up her mind. She taught me how to cross all these hurdles; she pointed the way for me. Following her instructions, I approached the NGO CARE. The official there took one look at my grades and recommended that I seek admission in Punjab College. I rejected the suggestion, saying it was an expensive college and the dues would be beyond my means. At this the official responded, 'Just decide what you want to do. You are being given a scholarship.'

Once this happened, my mother stood against the entire family and supported me in my educational career. My uncles continued to criticize my choice, saying that colleges are corrupt places which make a girl lose her morals and forget her manners, but my mother paid no heed to their malicious gossip.

Thus I continued my education.

Today I have a BA degree. My major subjects were Statistics, Mathematics and Economics. I am a teacher at a school that is all about awareness and enlightenment. I am so content with what life has brought my way. Even today I recognize Ms. Naila to be the source of all this, of helping me find a scholarship and persuading my mother to rethink her stance towards education.

The author is a teacher at the Sanjan Nagar Public Education Trust School, Lahore.

Stand up and be Counted

By Noor Amna Malik

I was now a teacher. Celebrated by some of my teachers in my own student days and brutally put down by others. Silenced by all. At least temporarily! I entered the classroom and the teaching profession with a different zeal: my students were not going to be silenced. In fact their silences were to be chased out of the classroom, chased out by my encouragement and of their curiosity and their spirit of inquiry.

These were all fine words. They didn't mean much to most of my colleagues at the private management institution where I was teaching BBA final semester and MBA.

The BBA Final semester was a batch of wonderful students who had succumbed to the pressure of constant discouragement from their teachers' their grades were now reflecting their low morale. Their teachers believed they could do no better, so what else could they do but to prove their teachers right?

Actually they could do plenty. They had to be trusted. I understood that much. What I wasn't expecting was that I, as a teacher who trusted them to work intelligently on projects, would not be trusted by my colleagues and the management.

Here's what happened. I was teaching Marketing to both the BBA and MBA classes. I decided to give 40% of the grade for a launch campaign for a product. Working in groups, they would develop a

feasibility report, marketing strategy, launch campaign and an electronic media commercial. We had practiced similar work throughout the semester. My students were revving to go. Excited and abuzz.

The faculty lounge was equally excited and abuzz, but for totally different reasons.

"What kind of an assessment is this! Our students don't know how to do this"

"What! How can BBA and MBA students do the same project!"

"This BBA batch! They can't even cope with routine assessment methods, how will they perform on such a bohemian task!"

And then the management:

"Ms. Noor Amina, just what do you think you are doing?"

I insisted this was the only way to test students. This way they will not be in each others shadow, each group will have their own unique project to work on. Life demands of us to work in cooperative ways, why do we want to teach our children to always compete?

I decided to give some ground in order to survive.

"Fine. I will test the M.BAs in some other way. But the BBA batch can and will do this product launch campaign."

More uproar. Followed by a lull.

I went ahead with my original plan.

Both my batches did their projects in ways even I, with all my trust in them, could not have imagined. They surpassed everyone's expectations. Some groups were approached by corporate giants for whose products they had made their mock-campaigns. These corporate moguls wanted to negotiate to buy the advertisements that some of these youngsters had made. These kids had always been good, but now they knew how good they were. Their grades in other courses also reflected the rise in their level of confidence.

It took a creative course design and a little bit of counseling to attain this. Students shared their personal problems with me, seeking support and a sympathetic ear. Specially my male students. Expected to be 'strong' from the day they are born, many of these boys were emotionally overwrought and in need of some support. Once they got that, they were on their way to success.

Years passed and I left the teaching profession. One evening I went to watch a play at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts. When it was time for the curtain call, I heard the name of one of my students from that same BBA Final batch. She had written the play. I was impressed with the theme and the sensitive treatment given to it by these youngsters. My old student had done a great job.

She came on stage, spoke her bit and then she said it. She had seen me sitting somewhere in the audience. She took my name and thanked me for supporting her to be able to do what she was doing today. Then she called me on stage to acknowledge me in front of the entire audience.

Overwhelmed and humbled, I went up and presented myself to the audience: a student who was once silenced, a teacher who was rebuked by colleagues for a creative course design, now acknowledged and celebrated by her student. Life had come full circle. Once led to a project by me, my student had now found her own project. And what a project it was!

Was I a great teacher? I am not so sure. I may have known only four out of ten facts well. But I taught those four in ways that would help my students internalize the information. Case studies, simulations, examples from the indigenous context.

All students even the 'weak' ones do well when exposed to such strategies, not because the strategies are great but because they are is no such thing as a weak

student. There are only students who are silenced and students who are allowed to blossom

Noor Amna Malik is currently working as the Director General, Learning and Innovation Wing, Higher Education Commission, Islamabad.

Strike While the Iron is Hot

By Laila Aamir

This story is about an unforgettable moment of my student life. This one incident changed my life. It transformed the biggest fear of my life, the fear of public speaking into a real strength. After this incident I realized that an inferiority complex is nothing but a state of mind. It can be overcome by a little practice and the right kind of guidance.

I am a very talkative person but only at home, with my friends and with the people I personally know. I am very reserved with strangers or in new places and situations. During my childhood, I was considered a sharp and smart student, always scored high grades but at the same time I was very quiet and shy around my relatives and my teachers. I was scared to talk in public or with strangers and even in my class,

probably due to a lack of self confidence. But this problem has abated considerably,

although some of those germs still linger on...

This was how it all happened. Mrs. Tahira was one of my favorite school teachers. I still remember that day when I was in ninth class. All of us boys and girls were gathered in the Chemistry Lab. Mrs. Tahira was explaining the theory and the procedure of preparing HCL gas to us. As soon as she finished her lecture, she told us to perform the practical, which we completed successfully.

At the end of the session she decided to take a quiz based on what she

had taught us that day. I answered all the questions that she asked me correctly. Sure of what the answers had been, I was happy to speak in class. However, a group of boys were unable to reply correctly, so Mrs. Tahira did what teachers often do in such situations; ask another student to explain. The only problem was that she asked me to explain the theory and procedure of the practical to this group of boys! I was more than a little reluctant to address them, so I tried hard to squiggle out of the situation. I said no. What Mrs. Tahira taught me at that time has changed my attitude towards life.

She said, "Look, if you will not do it today, you won't be able to do it ever.

Be confident, I know you can do it. Accept this as a challenge. The decision is yours... Do it now or be silent forever."

I took a minute to reflect on her words and then I agreed. I accepted the challenge as an opportunity. As I began I was very nervous, but after the first few minutes of explanation, I was relaxed and explained the theory and practical to the group of male students in detail. I also responded to almost all of their queries. The teacher appreciated my initiative.

As soon as I finished, I enjoyed a sense of accomplishment and realized that my fear of public speaking was unreal, something that existed only in my mind, in the absence of any real danger. The truth is that later on I could speak at public forums; I could also convince people of my view point. It would never have been possible without the opportunity offered me by my teacher and the confidence that she showed in me.

Even today, remembering that incident gives me goose bumps and I thank my teacher for teaching me a lesson that no book can ever teach. I do not know where she is right now but wherever she is, I always pray for her health, happiness and prosperity.

The author is teaching at The Aga Khan University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

The Class Barrier No More

By Naheed Parveen

Few years back, I belonged to that category of teachers who felt that being a government primary teacher, we are labeled as incompetent and uncaring by parents, officials and society alike so it doesn't really matter how hard we work and how well we teach. While I did not stop going to the class and teaching, but admittedly, I was rather strict with children. My moment of inspiration leading to tremendous changes in my teaching and attitude came from Bilal Zaheer, who was enrolled in my Early Childhood Education class. Bilal's two older siblings were also studying in the same school. They came from a very humble background, his father sold samosas but they were one of the very few parents who would come and ask about their children's progress.

Literally every day Bilal's mother would be standing outside the staff room and would not leave till she had met the teachers. Naturally she was scorned by a lot of teachers for wasting their time, such has been the cult in our school. Not surprisingly, Bilal was also singled out by his classmates for exclusion; no one would talk to him or ask him to play with him. Both teachers and students alike would mock his broken chappals (slippers), torn clothes and unwashed face.

Back then, I wasn't a very involved teacher but I felt for Bilal specially because of the way he stayed quiet while everyone else labeled him a dirty, good-for-nothing child. On the other hand, his mother's persistence made me rethink my own attitude towards them. It was during that time that I attended the training on Early Childhood Education that made me aware of the importance of the emotional and social development of children.

I decided to work with Bilal - at first, he didn't respond. But gradually when I tried to involve him in classroom tasks, he showed interest. Although it was six months ago that he enrolled in school, he was not able to write a single alphabet and would flunk every test. I stopped giving him any written tests till the time he learned to write. At the same time, I started talking to his mother asking her to send the children in clean uniforms, tidy them up, give home cooked food rather than giving them money to spend on unhygienic food from thelas (food vendors).

The results started showing Bilal stayed in my class for two years, (he repeated katchi class) and by the end of the second year, he was one of the brightest most active, and tidiest children in the class. When children were being promoted that year, the class one teacher blankly refused to accept Bilal in his class saying that he should repeat Katchi for the third time.

The teacher said he will not have 'dumb' children in his class. I requested him to at least allow him to sit in a test or talk to Bilal, which he did. After that he came to me and said he couldn't believe that Bilal knew everything he had asked on the test!

From an unwelcome student and his parent, Bilal and his mother became the most welcomed members of our school community. He is now studying in Class three and his mother still comes to me for advice.

What they taught me was not only the importance of making an effort but also that as teachers we can bring a positive change in the lives of our students. My attitude even with my own children has changed after seeing how patience, attention and time transformed Bilal. I am happy with my attitudinal change in the school every parent, colleague every child vouches for that. They appreciate the hard work that I now put in.

The author is an ECE (Katchi class) teacher in LT11E Moulvi Abdul Haq School, Liaqatabad Town.

The Gem Connoisseur

By Khurram Shahzad

After I did my intermediate and left my studies, I was later compelled by my friends' great performance in academics, to seek admission in a college. This was a dream for the realization of which I had to face many hurdles, turn towards factories to find work, begged and pleaded. My circumstances forced me to temporarily forget about my desire, because time was not to change its mood, until...

After working for a few months I saved money to take admission in regular college classes. In order to introduce myself in the new atmosphere I desperately needed a support. Other students displayed their talents in the most innovative ways which was a ray of light for me. I often tried to keep company with the brighter students in class so I could sit and study with them in the front of the class but I couldn't endear myself to them with my quiet temperament. As I was not very intelligent, I really needed a teacher who could instruct me and guide me on how to live a successful life.

I spent some days in disappointment because my passion for learning was at its peak. I barely passed the first monthly test. A few days after that we were all required to give a speech on our favourite personality. It was extremely difficult to speak for the first time in front of the students, and more so in front of the teachers. I kept thinking that may be I shouldn't give a speech, what if the other students laugh at me? What if I forget the speech?

I pepped myself up and went to college the next day. In class that day all the

students gave out their speeches fearlessly. When I stood up on my turn, my legs were shaking, my heart was racing, my teacher encouraged me and then I started to speak. At first I spoke haltingly and then I gained a flow in speaking. After class ended some of my class-fellows criticized my speech and said that the topic I had chosen had lost its importance. I was very disappointed. I had spoken on the poetry of Mirza Ghalib.

The next day I reached class late. When I asked for permission to enter, all the students turned around and looked at me. I felt deeply embarrassed. Then Dr. Khalid Nadeem, our teacher, stood up and announced the names of three students and I was one of them. Completely confused to hear my name, I stood up. I didn't have the courage to step forward.

All the other students were staring at me, since they knew what I was like. Following directions I finally went forward. I couldn't understand anything in this confused state of mind. Just then my name was announced again for securing the second position in the speech contest! My speech was then appreciated by everyone.

Sir Khalid, a PhD himself, addressed me in front of the whole class and said that he saw in me a future officer. This statement was a very valuable gift for me. I suddenly realized that I had become the person that I had started to chisel in a dream in order to present him in front of the world. The announcement had left me in shock. The rest of the class was surprised too. They were probably amazed because they didn't think I was that bright.

I met Sir Khalid informally in the college library for the first time. He appreciated my speech and then added that I was an uncut stone that had not dust but gems hidden inside it. His comments were of immeasurable importance for me.

He would address everyone by the Urdu pronoun for 'respected you' (Aap). His

personality was very distinct in the entire college. All the students now started to respect me because he had complimented me, and I was proud of this. Sir Khalid was extremely pleased when I got a good result in the December tests.

The fervour for getting the college magazine published was at its zenith. Every student was eager to have his contribution selected for publication. I loved poetry but writing short stories was the real test. I was elected to be a member of the Art and Literature Club. The short stories I had written were greatly appreciated. . Over time, Sir Khalid kept giving me nice books as presents and recommended books from the library for me to read, such as books to polish one's personality, such as Lataif-o-Nawadir.

There were several other students, apart from me, in whose life Sir Khalid was adding beautiful colours. After I graduate from college, he would still send me the books he had authored and I would proudly show them to people, telling them how it was my teacher who had written them.

While education was my field of profession, I was immensely interested in literature. After I graduated from college I paid him a visit at his home. The amount of books I saw there was mind-boggling.

Seeking an employment was now my primary responsibility. My needs made me forget about my desire to go to university. Following his instructions, I applied in offices and colleges, and not in factories.

After a few days I got an interview call from a college that is affiliated with the Punjab University. The training that I had received from Sir Khalid, and the advice that I had incorporated in my life, greatly impressed the Principal of the college who interviewed me. Thus I was hired as a teacher. The guidance and the enjoyment that Sir Khalid provided my every step of the way, is matchless. The author is.

The Power of a Strong Voice

By Naila Nadeem Bhatti

When I got admission in St. Lawrence College, Karachi, I decided to study Islamic History and Islamic Studies. I am a Christian. My choice of subjects perturbed some of my Muslim class-fellows who locked me up in a room. I was sitting there quietly weeping when Ms. Qudsia and Ms. Shahnaz came and rescued me. They took me to the principal Ms. Khadija. As I sat there crying, all three tried to comfort me.

I lived in the nun's hostel in Karachi. I wanted to become a nun myself too. That is why the cardinal of the Karachi Diocese Mr. Joseph Cordero knew me quite well. He visited the college and gave the principal written permission for me to study the subjects of my choice. His permission letter was immediately sent off to the then Minister of Education. It was with the Minister's written permission that I was allowed to take compulsory Islamic Studies (which was compulsory only for Muslims) and Islamic History.

During that time, one day, out of the blue, the college was closed on emergency grounds. I was very surprised. Until I noticed that many girls were raising slogans against me and there were even some stones thrown close to where I stood. Communists that existed in society had spilled over inside our college. It was like in the movies. Except all this was real. It was my life.

After that incident Ms. Qudsia made it a point to pay attention to all aspects of my life. That is why I am happy to follow in my teacher's footsteps even today.

I still think about her because what she taught us almost twenty five years ago is still relevant today. I didn't just receive knowledge from her as a student of FA, but to this day I am still benefitting from her iconic personality. She was simple and dignified. I still try to follow her way of speaking, be it in Urdu or English. She used to tell us to make our point in a confident and rational manner.

Ms Qudsia would always enter the classroom with a smiling face. She would always greet first. Her braided hair hung on her back; her face was pristine and devoid of all signs of make up, her smile being her only adornment. She usually wore high heeled shoes. She would push her spectacles on her forehead while teaching. She would walk in with her bag on one shoulder, and a stack of thick history books in the other hand. I would always step forward and offer to carry the books for her, at which she would always be very pleased.

Ms. Qudsia has been a reference point for me throughout my teaching career. When she spoke she spoke with great acumen. In our class we often used to discuss political events and expressed our views on India, Afghanistan and America. This was during Zia-ul-Haq's regime, when I was in second year. She used to tell us how Indian and Pakistani politics was dominated by a few dynasties and how the common man was wronged and under-represented. Ms Qudsia had great faith that the future of our country would be better than the past or the present and that the corrupt rulers' days will soon come to an end.

I still remember fondly how she used to pull her dupatta from one side and spread it out, how she would get in her car at the end of the day, still as alert as she had been in the morning, and drive off.

The author is a teacher and community worker at the Sanjan Nagar Higher Secondary School, Lahore.

The Uncared For

By Mehnaz Feroze

Teaching at a drop-in center for child domestic labour is different from teaching elsewhere. These children are not just from poor households but from households where children are made aware of the poverty; these children are not scolded by their parents for being naughty like other children are, they are scolded by their employers for small mistakes that they make while working. Childhood is just a word for them; their experience of childhood was aborted before its time.

Zubair and his sister Nasreen were my students. Nasreen used to work at someone's house. For some days the two did not turn up at the center. I decided to go to their house to find out what the matter was. What I found out was a heart-rending but common story. Their mother had undergone surgery and was still recuperating from that, so Nasreen was now doing her own share of work and also working at the houses her mother used to do.

They had to take care of their employers particularly because the mother owed them some money. She did not want them to think that she had run away with their money; that is why the daughter had to go in her place now. Little Zubair was working at a barber's shop for Rs.100 a day. Since the sister was not going to the drop-in center any more, he too felt unmotivated to go. Like all mothers, their mother wanted them to study, but...

I convinced Zubair to attend school so that he can earn more than what he is earning right now. Nasreen has also returned to the center. She is attending school and is learning to stitch.

How many a children roam the streets aimlessly after work, because no one ever took them by the hand and led them to a school, no one ever made them see the point of it all...because no one ever cared enough...

The author is a teacher at the Idara Taleem o Aagahi drop in center, non-formal school for children working as child labourers, in Rawalpindi.

“Well Done!”

By Aqeela Sadiq

I grew up like many other children do. I was interested in studying, but more so in toys and in playing games. When I started school at age three, I was happy to go to school. The first day of school I raised a hue and cry. My teacher pacified me with toys and I settled in my school. Sometimes I would spend my time watering the plants with the school maid.

Thus passed my years in primary school. When I reached middle school my interest in school work was waning. I would come home from school and then go to the Qari Sahib (Quran teacher), only to be scolded and put down by him. My Math teacher at school was always angry especially if someone would ask a question. My Urdu teacher would not stop complaining about my hand writing being untidy. Instead of calling me by my name she had taken to calling me 'unintelligent.'

When I reached grade nine I took arts and went to another school. Things only got worse. The principal was our Math teacher. It was for the first time that I saw a cane for beating children in class. The cane was not just kept in class. It was used routinely.

And then Ms. Lubna became my Math teacher as I was switched to another section. Gentle, soft-spoken and honest to her profession. The way she explained concepts, the way she appreciated me, changed my life. The mathematics that was no less than a curse for me now became a warm ray of light for me.

I got answers to all my questions. Ms Lubna quenched my thirst for knowing, for asking Why? How? When I answered a

question she would say 'Well done!' On my notebook she would write 'very good'. This 'Well done' had such a deep impact on me that I started to gain interest in my studies. I now had the spirit to move ahead, to compete with my class mates. I was a Humanities (Arts) group student yet I was now competing with girls in the Science group. I was scoring 100% marks in my math exams now. In the grade nine exam I stood first while the Science student secured the second position. The joy this gave me cannot be expressed in words.

I became the class monitor and maintained my top position in class. For FA (Intermediate) I returned to my old school. I told everyone about my scores and positions, trying hard to erase from myself the painful label: unintelligent.

In this school I had never heard the phrase 'Well done!' These are the words that led me to success. After that I got very gentle teachers in the rest of my academic career.

The 'Well done' that helped me make it is the gift that I pass on to my own students today; they do have talents but to bring those out we need a generous dose of 'Well done!'

The author is a lecturer at the Government Girls Degree College, Mansehra.

“Why, Father?”

By Mehnaz Feroz

Ruby's father doesn't work. Her mother, sisters and Ruby herself work to earn a living. Since the father is not working, the children have not been able to attend regular school. Then Ruby heard about our drop-in center and came to us. A girl of 13, she had to be admitted to nursery because she had never attended school before. She would work in other peoples' homes and then come to school in the evening shift.

One day Ruby was absent. And then the next day. And the day after that. I went to her house to find out what the matter was. Ruby's mother had undergone surgery and was still recuperating from it. Ruby and her sister now had to go work in her place too, so their work didn't get done by the time the evening shift began.

When I probed a little further I found out that Ruby's mother owed some money to the woman she worked for. That was why she couldn't absent herself from work, because she was now working there to pay off her loan. Needless to say, her employer took a little advantage of this fact and was not willing to make any adjustments or give any time off to the mother, unless, of course, Ruby and her sister came to work instead of their mother.

Once the mother got better and started to work again, the children still did not come to our school since their tempo had now broken. I made another trip to their house. I convinced them to bring their little brother to nursery, and to join the school and the sewing classes themselves so they have a useful skill.

I want these children to have at least basic literacy and a useful skill through

which they can work at their own terms. I want this generation of deprived people to have the power that comes with knowledge. Real change starts here, with Ruby taking control of her life...

The author is a teacher at the drop-in center for non-formal learning, Idara-Taleem-o-Aagahi, Islamabad.

Learning Slowly but Surely!

By Sheba Sultan

“She can do it but she makes careless mistakes”. These were the words my poor dad heard on every parent-teacher meeting. I had failed in Mathematics again. I had earned the same result every time since grade five. I was now in eighth grade. I would still be trying to grasp the content taught in lesson one and the whole class would be ahead at lesson seven.

So, I failed Math and due to my lack of confidence, I would just pass in the other subjects. My only saving grace was English, in which I was the star of the class. But students cannot survive on one subject alone and so I was a wreck by the time I reached grade eight and had no hope for the future, especially the matriculation exams.

Somehow I just could not grasp what the other kids learnt readily. I was convinced that I was the ugly duckling who would never ever be able to swim. I had no hope to ever be able to even complete a math exam, let alone getting it correct.

So life trudged on until he came along. The one person who taught this duckling to swim to the length of the entire river, and swim it so well that those who had been sneering at her low grades were left gaping. It is to this wonderful teacher that this story is dedicated. This was the teacher who understood that not all students can readily grasp one formula after another without being terribly confused and that studies involved a bit of fun and variety. This is a real-life story which took place somewhere in Karachi, 1997.

One day my mother told me to get my books ready because Mr. Iqbal's son was coming to teach me Math. I was skeptical and a bit angry. I didn't even want to try to learn math. I was hopeless and sick of it all. But what happened next was far from my nightmares. Mr. Vincent (whom I called Vincent Uncle) turned out to be the best teacher in the world! He did not ask me any questions about what I understood, what I did not. He just started telling me stories of his school day pranks and explaining $A+B=AB$ and so on.

After an hour I was left with 20 sums to do for the next day. I still smile when I remember how happily I completed all twenty sums in one hour! The next day, however, I was told in very kind tones, “Bacha jee (dear child) you have inverted the formula and applied it to all these sums” In other words, all twenty were 'wrong!' But he did not use this word and smoothly went ahead and explained the same formula to me for a second time.

I liked my other teachers but the only difference was that I enjoyed the way Vincent Uncle taught me. He let me grasp the algebraic formulae at my own pace. He tolerated my incompetence in Geometry and patiently recapitulated the angles of every triangle time and again. He stayed for three hours instead of one until I had understood every theorem thoroughly. He used simple examples to help me understand and joked to lighten up the admonishments when I was lazy or forgetful but he always let me work at my own pace and even gave me a short break now and then to play a game on the computer or listen to a song.

When the Matriculation exams took place, Vincent Uncle spent hour upon hour training me to do every sum in three different ways and also how to cross-check it. He went with my dad to drop me at the Exam Centre and got me my favorite ice-cream afterwards. And he proudly patted my head and laughed aloud when I obtained 94 marks out of hundred in the

Board Exam. It was unbelievable! I had done what I couldn't even dream of. I owe my good marks and my confidence to this teacher who understood the problems a struggling student faces and whose patience, and good will helped me to achieve such a wonderful result. And now that I am a teacher, I remember that what I learnt from Vincent Iqbal was not just mathematics; it was the whole theory of student-centred teaching which involved relating to the student and catering to his/her needs and goals.

The author is an educator at the Notre Dame Institute of Education, Karachi.

The Mother, the Daughter and I

By Navina Tahir Maqbool

Tahira's mother brought her to me for guidance one day. They were our neighbours but not for long. Tahira's father had recently passed away and his family was asking Tahira and her mother to leave the house. Tahira was covered in a big chaddar that day. She looked so sad. Her mother wanted me to point the way for Tahira so she could learn skills to be able to financially support herself and her mother.

I offered to find out at the vocational guidance center if Tahira could get a Zakat scholarship to be exempted from the Rs.1000 fee for the 3 month computer course. It turned out that those scholarships had already been awarded to other students. Tahira collapsed under the weight of all this pressure and hopelessness. She cried tears of anger and frustration as she said.

"I am not good enough for anything! It would have been better had you had a son and not me!" There are many people one comes across who are in need; but somehow Tahira's pain touched my heart and I felt like her pain was my own. My eyes fill with tears even today as I think of their misery and anguish, the fear and the uncertainty that surrounded them then.

I offered to pay her fee for the computer course. That was the easy part. The tough part came next.

Tahira had done her matric. Her early schooling had been from a village school. Teaching her was an uphill task. Although most of my students at the center are from deprived backgrounds, yet they

cope well with the course work. Tahira, on the other hand, was struggling even with basic concepts such as the interfaces of computer software. I was working and studying myself at that time so it was almost impossible for me to give her extra coaching. Yet, I somehow made time for her, even on Sundays.

But that time has passed now. Tahira did manage to finish her computer course. Today she is working in an office and is preparing to take her BA exams. I look forward to continue giving her guidance and support her in doing her Masters too. I had also engaged her mother in several stitching assignments to enable her to earn her own living.

As I see a confident and capable Tahira today, I feel grateful that I decided to support her.

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